

**L**essons for Teachers  
of Beginners.

By Frances W. Danielson

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Lessons for teachers of  
beginners









**LESSONS FOR TEACHERS  
OF BEGINNERS**









A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

# Lessons for Teachers of Beginners

*by*

FRANCES WELD DANIELSON



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## INTRODUCTION

"I am not worthy to be a teacher of little children" may be the sincere cry of a fine nature, or it may be the false claim of a Uriah Heep. The distinction can be clearly seen by the attempt that is made to become more worthy. The Uriah Heep type of teacher combines with her protestations of humility a secret satisfaction with her ideals and methods, and steadfastly maintains her dead level. The truly humble teacher grasps at every possible means to increase her efficiency.

In the Sunday-school teaching force there is every variation of satisfied stagnation, inert discouragement and the noble discontent that not only sees visions, but is ready to labor to attain them. It is for teachers of the last sort that the following lessons are written, to assist them in achieving their purpose.

A criticism of modern educational methods is that the memory of the child is developed more highly than his power to think, and the tide is gradually turning toward the cultivation of the reason. So the teacher of today needs not only to be familiar with the views of educational leaders; she should have opinions of her own. Mere knowledge or repetition of the conclusions formed by others amounts to little unless it has passed through the lens of her own reason.

The list of books on psychology, child study and pedagogy is a notable one, and these lessons make no preten-

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sion to add to the teacher's knowledge on any of these subjects. Their purpose, rather, is to stimulate her to think independently, to make her own observations, and to gain ability through practise.

In order to be helpful to groups of teachers or teachers' unions, the lessons are arranged for use in a class, the leader of which should employ the questions and suggestions for discussion to draw out the thought of all its members. Reviews of books, papers, or reports of research work done outside the class may well be recognized by a certificate at the end of the course. The lessons are purposely made suggestive rather than exhaustive, that they may be practical when the class period is short.

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# LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

## LESSON I

### KNOWING THE CHILDREN

*My teachers are the children.—Friedrich Froebel*

#### The Necessity

Yesterday the first step in the education of the teacher was the study of the subjects it was her duty to impart to the child, who was looked upon as an empty receptacle into which knowledge must be poured. Today the first step is the study of the child, who is believed to possess instincts that it is the teacher's function to develop.

A wise educator has said, "The answer to the question, How to teach? is contained in the answer to a second question, How is the child able to learn?" The reply to this comes from the child himself, and those only are competent to answer it who know him—his nature, his instincts, his feelings, his abilities.

Did you ever think of the intimate acquaintance Luther Burbank must have had with plants before he was able to make improvements in them? And he did not know simply *the* plant, but the cactus, the dahlia and the peach-tree. It was through his knowledge of the peculiarities of these particular plants that he was able to

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eliminate the spine from the cactus, to give the dahlia fragrance, and to cultivate a peach-tree that will resist frost.

So the teacher must know John and Mary and Sarah, before she is fitted to form a composite picture called "the child," the accuracy of which is in proportion to the number of individuals who went to form it. For it is the child she is to teach rather than any subject.

### The Method

Once convinced of its importance, how, then, shall we set to work to know children? Shall we go first to the library and steep ourselves in other people's knowledge? Shall we analyze children as a botanist analyzes flowers? Shall we begin by painting an ideal picture of children as our standard?

I find certain objections to any of these methods, as the beginning of intimacy with children. Perchance, while we are deep in a book on child study, a real child passes by unobserved. As the poet finds in a flower something besides petals and stamens and pistil, so the child-lover sees that in a child to which the child-botanist is blind. And in regard to the ideal painting, I challenge the imagination of any one who does not know children to exceed the charm of the reality.

It was Froebel, that wonderful seer, who disclosed the secret, in his rally cry to all who would help childhood, "Come, let us live with our children!"

Mothers have a great advantage over other women in living with their children, at least, literally; yet I sometimes wonder if many mothers do not live with their children's bodies, and dwell quite outside the realm of their

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minds. There are mothers who are better nurses than companions; but the mothers who do enter into the mental and moral, as well as the physical life of their children, have a wonderful opportunity to become so sympathetic with child nature that they will be a blessing to childhood, long after their own little ones are men and women.

And is this call of Froebel to mothers only? Because a woman neither bears nor rears children, is she barred out of their lives? She may enter, if she will. She may be the enchanting story-teller, who comes with her tales at bedtime. She may be the fairy godmother, who touches the dullest task with her wand and turns it into a fascinating game. She may be the lady who gives parties for children, even, they will tell you, when it is not her birthday. She may be the fascinating correspondent, as Phillips Brooks was to his nephews and nieces. She may be the grown-up visitor who is watched for, the chosen companion for a walk, the confidante of small secrets, the recipient of baby gifts.

You think by so doing she is getting far away from Sunday-school teaching? Ah, no! she is drawing very, very close, for, little by little, she is entering into the minds and hearts of the children she teaches. She is learning to speak their language, to enjoy their pleasures, to think their thoughts, to realize their needs.

### The Example

Do we require an example? We have one that is notable. When mothers brought their little ones to Jesus and the disciples sent them away, even an ardent child-lover of this age can appreciate their point of view. The

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pressing needs of the sick and the sinning, the work of extending the new teaching that was bringing life to an old religion were so important that surely children could wait—children, who, so far as we know, were neither sick nor needy but quite normal. In a sentence Jesus made a total readjustment of values, as he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," and turned from the crowd to cultivate the friendship of children.

### The Reward

You may well feel that your labor to gain a knowledge of children is rewarded by your increased power as a teacher, and that the love of children which comes from a deeper acquaintance is a blessing beyond compare. But if, in the pride of your heart, or in the real desire to be of service, you are filled with an undue sense of your importance to childhood, look into your own life, and see what their companionship means to you.

You are aging and would fain call back youth? But see, your old-time enthusiasm, your credulity, your optimism are coming back! They—the little ones—are bringing them to you. You are young? Yes, but the self-control, the patience, the poise, the sympathy that crude youth lacks—all this you are gaining. They—the children—are demanding it of you. You are a mother burdened with your responsibility? Your wider acquaintance with childhood is giving you a new grasp of your own children's problems. You have missed motherhood? Here is your opportunity to wear for a time that crown.

You may say that you cannot afford the time for this

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study of children, but whoever you are, old or young, married or single, busy or idle, let me tell you that rather, a thousand times rather, you cannot afford to miss the wonderful privilege.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. What opportunities has a teacher in a city Sunday school to become acquainted with her children during the week? a teacher in a country school?
2. Explain why joining children in their play helps one to understand them.
3. Where outside of Sunday school can a teacher tell stories to children, and how will this help her in her teaching?
4. Name some stories that appeal to children of this age. Good sources are "How to Tell Stories to Children," and "Stories to Tell to Children," by Sara Cone Bryant.
5. Do you agree with the ideas in Chapter I, from "The Children of the Future," by Nora Archibald Smith?
6. Read and comment upon pages 1-4, from "Talks with the Training Class," by Margaret Slattery.

## LESSON II

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHILDHOOD

*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child.—Paul the Apostle*

#### **Has It Meaning?**

Scarcely more distinct are the four stages of the butterfly—the egg, the caterpillar, the chrysalid and the winged creature—than are childhood, youth, middle age and old age in a human life. Each period has its peculiar qualities, and an important result of the child study suggested in the last chapter is an understanding of the general characteristics of childhood.

Perhaps the first question to settle is our attitude to these universal tendencies. Are they to be eradicated or promoted? Are they implanted by the Creator merely that the child may gain strength through overcoming them? Is it God's plan that human nature be made over entirely in order to please him who formed it? For, whatever may be said concerning individual traits, it seems hardly possible that qualities common to childhood should come to it by chance. Is the efficient teacher to be armed with a pruning knife? Are bird, beast and fish provided with instincts necessary for their existence, while the child's inborn characteristics must be rooted out before he can be called a child of God?





THE AGE OF DEPENDENCE



## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHILDHOOD

The only way for us to come to a decision is to consider these general characteristics and judge whether they are helps or hindrances to the child's development. We must not make the mistake of viewing them as they appear in old age, middle age or youth, but decide whether they are an asset or detriment to childhood, with its limitations; whether they prepare or disqualify for later periods of life; and whether it is possible that these very tendencies, which might be distinctly evil carried on to manhood or womanhood in the same form, may not have their function in childhood.

### Is It Inferior to Animal Life?

Children are frequently termed "little animals," but in one important respect they appear to start out in life rather less advantageously. How does a child of a week compare in his physical equipment for the world with a bird of the same age?<sup>1</sup> Has a colt any advantage over him, when both are a few days old? If you had to depend entirely upon yourself at birth, which would you prefer to be, a child or a codfish? Has a four or five-year-old child reached the full development of his physical powers? Compare such a child with the animals referred to, at a similar age. What, then, shall we note as a universal characteristic of little children in contrast to young animals?

<sup>1</sup>The questioning method is employed to draw out the thought of the class, and to induce discussion. The blackboard should be used to record conclusions formed, but it is pedantic and deadly to original thought and inductive teaching to insist upon any special word or phrase in the teacher's mind. The suggestions of the class should be used if they express the idea, even though less felicitously, the object being to stimulate thought, not to produce perfect outlines.

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At first consideration this prolonged helplessness (dependence or weakness) seems a decided disadvantage. On further thought we wonder whether it can have any connection with the great contrast in human and animal family relations. Of how long duration is a mare's fondness for her colt? Parent birds' care of their young? Is there such a thing as codfish family life? Might the long need of nurture promote love between parents and children? Would you, then, consider it better for a child to require care for a comparatively long time than to start out in life highly developed? Do you see God's hand in this?

### **Is It Handicapped?**

Look also at the mind of a little child. Is he born with knowledge of the world into which he comes, as the codfish seems to be? Even though he may be too weak to feed and clothe and care for himself, does he know how? If only the accumulated knowledge of his ancestors had descended upon him, so that he might begin where they left off! What a pity that his father's learning, as well as his property, is not a part of his heritage! Why must he begin life inarticulate and ignorant, when the wild creatures can speak their language and get their own food soon after birth?

Yet, handicapped as he appears to be at first, he soon leaves his animal contemporaries far behind. He has inherited capacities for obtaining knowledge far greater than those of any animal. If his knowledge were ready-made, would there be a chance for original development? It is often said that no two children are alike. How about young codfishes? Higher in the animal scale there

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are greater individual differences, but they are slight compared with those seen in human beings. Isn't it plain that the very ignorance of childhood is an asset, a plan of God?

### Its Timidity

There is an emotional characteristic of little children, which is the natural result of their ignorant helplessness. The story of a little boy's day will help you to think what this is.

In the morning this little boy comes running in from his play. "Bear! naughty big bear!" he cries. His mother soothes him and explains that the big dog is not a bear, but a delightful playmate. She takes him to walk and a stranger pats him on the head, whereupon he hides behind her. They attempt to cross the street and he draws back as a puffing, snorting automobile rushes past. In the afternoon lightning flashes and thunder rolls, whereupon he hurries to his protector, in tears at the unusual noise. At night, when the dark blots out all the dear, familiar, household things, his mother's lap seems the only safe place.

Is this a natural picture? Not every child is as fearful, but this little boy's fears are those typical of childhood. Surely this cannot be God's plan, you say, unless he desires a race of cowards. However, when animals are too weak to challenge danger, they flee from it. May not the child's fear be a necessary consequence of his ignorant helplessness, tending to self-preservation? Suppose the harmless dog had been a bear? Is it safe for a child to go to any stranger? Loud noises and swiftly-moving objects are often a menace to his welfare; and if

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the dark were to him as the daylight, into what dangers might he not fall?

Certainly we do not wish the little child to be timid all his life, but what we are considering now is the immediate effect of fear upon him. Many psychologists call the universal fears of childhood, such as those mentioned above, a heritage of the race, because the child needs them for his safety, as did his savage ancestors. They do appear to be really from God, even though we try to modify or eradicate them in later years.

### **Its Lack of Self-Control**

Who that knows children has not grieved over the sight of an infuriated little boy lying on the floor screaming with rage, or a flushed little girl striking out with her fists or even biting some offender! Such manifestations bring children close to the level of animals. "The little beast!" we exclaim. "The young savage!"

James Sully says of the child, "That he often shows so close a resemblance to the brute suggests how little ages of civilized life with the suppression of these furious impulses have done to tame down the ancient and carelessly transmitted instincts."

And yet, can you honestly say that it would be better for a child never to experience anger? The anger of animals results in their self-protection. Is it sometimes so with children? Would you admire a child who tamely submitted to injury or opposition? Has anger a legitimate function in adult life? Did Christ ever show anger? Mention instances of passionate outbreaks of children and their causes. Should you say that these causes were usually selfish or altruistic? Might the cause

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determine whether anger is right or wrong? Do you feel that there can be any divine plan in this apparently unpleasant characteristic?

### Its Self-Absorption

Isn't the child a pretty selfish sort of being? He begins life crying for food and warmth. At four and five he is scarcely capable of any great self-sacrifice. We see the same tendency in the animal world, calling it the "Struggle for Life" and the result the "Survival of the Fittest." The instinct for self-preservation, the "will to live," is predominant.

Could life continue without it? The infant whose cries did not proclaim his lack of nutriment might starve to death. When we think of this aspect of the case, selfishness resolves itself into "self-feeling," as this phase of childhood has been happily termed, and the possibility of eventually attaining the heights of self-sacrifice seems none the less because of early childhood's absorption in itself, that it may protect and know itself.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Review "The Meaning of Infancy," by John Fiske.
2. Give your opinion of "Child Nature and Child Nurture," by Edward P. St. John, pages 31-37; or "Children's Ways," by James Sully, chapters 7 and 8.
3. Mention evidences of fear you have observed in children.
4. Are your views on children's anger influenced by "Child Nature and Child Nurture," pages 44-51?
5. Give your ideas on the necessity or disastrous effect of "self-feeling" in children.
6. State your reasons for considering the characteristics discussed divinely planned or matters of chance.

## LESSON III

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHILDHOOD (*continued*)

*One of the greatest lines of work lies before us: the understanding of little children, in order that they may be properly trained.—Elizabeth Harrison*

#### **The Natural Way of Growth**

Imagine yourself in a room with a number of little children entirely unrestrained. What would you notice about them? Is the same thing characteristic of your Beginners' circle, before the session? For how long have you seen a little child keep perfectly quiet? Did this physical activity begin in babyhood? As you deal with children, do you find it annoying? Shouldn't they be forced to be quiet? Is this a possibility? Do you see any reason for such constant motion?

I like Drummond's fancy of primitive man sitting in the sun, with no desire to do otherwise, till nature by moving forces him to action. The sun moves to the west and he must move or freeze. The wild creatures move toward him and he is obliged to escape them. His food does not fall into his lap; he must get it. And so through this forced activity he grows capable of more diverse deeds. He is no longer a mere being sitting in the sun. He is a hunter, a builder, a thinking, acting, developing man.



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I like, too, the first picture of Froebel's "Mother Play," called "Play with the Limbs." It depicts a mother's instinctive encouragement of her baby's impulse toward activity by pressing against the tiny kicking feet. It illustrates, also, in sketches of a whirling mill-wheel, a toiling woman and spreading trees, the great principle of development through self-activity.

If stagnation is a sign of death, there are possibilities of increased life in a child's activity. That it should be guided is as evident as that the fear and anger and self-feeling necessary to childhood must be modified as a child grows. That the activity of childhood spells future power is equally apparent. Thus in an infant's kicks and a little child's restlessness we discover the far-seeing plan of the Father of all.

### How the World Enters

Not only is a child's body in almost constant motion, but his mind is equally active absorbing the impressions that come trooping in through the five avenues that lead from the world to himself.

"As each new life is given to the world,  
The senses—like a door that swings two ways—  
Stand ever 'twixt its inner, waiting self  
And that environment with which its lot  
Awhile is cast.

A door that swings two ways:

Inward at first it turns, while Nature speaks,  
Then outward, to set free an answering thought."

At this age are the senses very impressionable?  
Through what senses does the child gain most knowledge?  
Is he capable of arranging and coordinating his impres-

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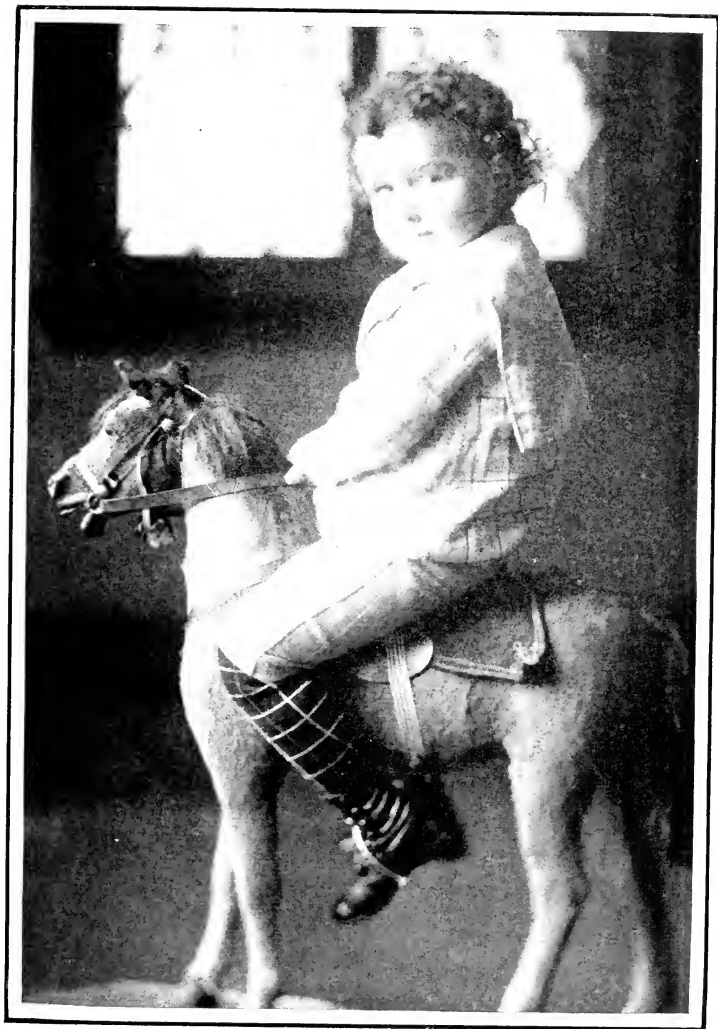
sions? Can you see why early quick perceptions are necessary to acquaintance with the world? Think of the full storehouse the child will have to draw upon in years to come!

### A Pleasant Means to Knowledge

One way in which a child's mental activity shows itself you must all have observed. Why does a baby wave his hand? Is it a child's natural manner of saying good bye? No; he is trying to imitate the motion of his mother's hand, that he has often seen waved. Over and over again his patient mother says "Mamma" to an apparently unresponsive listener, till one day he attempts to reproduce the word. The dog barks and he calls him a "bow-wow," the clock is a "tick-tick," the engine a "choo-choo,"—these names being mere imitations of the noises made.

He grows older and we see him at his play—prancing like a horse, teaching like his school teacher, pounding as the carpenter pounds, and marching as the soldier marches. Most of these early plays are merely imitating the activities about him.

And is this of any use at all, do you ask? Can God wish his children to be mere copyists, only reflections of those around them? Ah, but think what a child learns through imitation! He understands the meaning of anything he acts out. It becomes part of himself. Thus language is acquired, thus a child gains skill in the use of his hands, and thus, through learning to comprehend the life of others, he takes a long step from egoism to "otherism," and the distant future shows us the early manifesta-



A FEARLESS HORSEMAN



## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHILDHOOD

tions of imitation grown into the endeavor to pattern his life after the life of Christ.

### A Wondrous Gift

We need not fear that children will become uninteresting and uniform, for there is one characteristic of childhood that saves them from this. Let us take a walk with a child I know, and you will understand what I mean. We pass a field where corn-stalks are piled up. "See the funny old women bowing at each other," she says. The next moment she pulls my hand and breaks into a run. "Somebody's chasing us," she cries, and we hurry away from the imaginary foe. "See my sword!" she continues, brandishing my parasol. Then her eyes grow dreamy. "Why, there's a dolly in a red silk dress!" she says, pointing to a bush covered with red berries. "See her skirts wave! I think she is dancing."

What is this wonderful, vivifying child-quality, that makes a palace out of a hovel and transforms the most prosaic surroundings into fairyland? What is the alchemy that changes a child in his own feeling into the person or animal he pretends to be? This is a power quite distinct from any possessed by animals, for, as James Sully says, "A cat or a dog will be quite ready to go through a kind of make-believe game, yet even in the play the cat remains the cat, and the dog the dog."

Surely none but a Gradgrind, to whom fact only is truth, can help regarding the imagination as a blessed possession, and to whom can we attribute anything so marvelous but to a divine power? The fancy of childhood will one day make possible the formation of ideals that will be the guiding stars of life.

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### A Path to God

There is a certain punctuation mark that well typifies the young child. What is it? The interrogation point, to be sure. How do you feel about this tendency of children to question? Do you consider it a real nuisance? Try to imagine a child who never asks a question. How would he learn anything? You may say you would be only too delighted to impart information, if you could choose your time and manner of doing so, but are you quite sure you would never forget to? I firmly believe that the children's questions are a necessary prod to even the best-intentioned educators.

The great forces of nature are a constant wonder to a child. The sun that kissed his face only this morning is fast disappearing. "Who is pulling it down behind the hills?" he asks. The rain wets his face. "Where does it come from?" he wants to know. The rainbow arches the sky. "Who painted it?" he wonders. He searches for the cause of the invisible wind.

"I felt you push, I heard you call,  
I could not see yourself at all!  
O wind, a-blowing all day long,  
O wind, that sings so loud a song!"

He gazes in astonishment at the spangled heavens and cries,

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are!"

And as his curiosity is plainly a very important means to knowledge, so that particular phase of curiosity which seeks for a cause behind nature's marvels is as plainly a path to God.

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### Appealing Characteristics

Does a little child challenge your statements, or is he inclined to believe them? Isn't credulity a characteristic of this age? Would it be easier or harder to teach a child, were this not so? Try to picture a skeptical little child. This is scarcely thinkable, so accustomed are we to the faith of early childhood. Possibly it is this especial trait of trust, which leads to teachableness, that Christ alluded to when he said, "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

And this is closely related to another distinctive quality of early childhood. Is it difficult to turn a little child's attention from one thing to another? Give an instance of this which you have witnessed. His suggestibility, as well as his credulity, helps to make him teachable, and as some one has said, "Teachableness is the condition of all growth in the kingdom of science and in the kingdom of heaven."

### The Heart of a Child

The last characteristic of childhood that will be outlined is one denied by people who call children "cruel little brutes, without real affection." Do you believe that a child has natural sympathy and love? How have you seen him act when a grown person is suffering? Does he ever torture an animal and seem amused at its contortions? Yet doesn't he like to be near his friends? Isn't he affectionate toward his mother? Doesn't he mourn when she leaves him? His moist kisses, his tight hugs, his wish to be cuddled—are not these evidences of affection?

It is true that one person quickly displaces another in

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a child's heart, that he may apparently forget an absent parent, that he loves those who make him comfortable, and fails in sympathy simply because he has no knowledge of the suffering he witnesses. But it is also true that this evanescent, selfish feeling in the little child is the germ of "the greatest thing in the world"—love, the love that, beginning as a sporadic affection for whoever ministers to his physical needs, will little by little think less of benefits received and more of those it can bestow. As Drummond says, "The Struggle for the Life of Others is the psychological name for the greatest word of ethics—Other-ism, Altruism, Love."

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Report pages 41-46, from "The Unfolding Life," by Antoinette A. Lamoreaux.
2. Make a list of all the early plays of children you can recall, and then analyze them to find how many are purely imitative.
3. Analyze again the list of children's plays you have made to find how many are imaginative. Discuss chapters on "The Realm of Fancy" and "The Enchantment of Play," from "Children's Ways," by James Sully.
4. Read pages 33, 34, 38 and 39, from "The Child and His Religion," by George E. Dawson, or pages 44-53, from "Children's Ways," and compare children's questions you have heard.
5. State your feeling as to whether love and sympathy are instinctive in young children.
6. Name any characteristics not mentioned in these lessons which you consider of great significance in childhood.



## LESSON IV

### CHILDREN AS INDIVIDUALS

*No amount of "child study" will save teacher or mother the trouble of studying her own children.—Edward Porter St. John*

#### "The Child" and the Individual

In our second lesson we compared children with young codfishes, and gave as one of the advantages of the child's helpless infancy his capacity for individual development. We then proceeded to consider characteristics common to childhood—the "alike-ness" of children—and discovered these general traits by picking out the same quality as it appears in this, that and the other child of our acquaintance. Suppose we now look at the matter from the opposite point of view, and, regarding these general characteristics as a standard, find out how far individuals depart from it. In other words, having with painstaking care painted a picture of that hypothetical being, "the child," we will compare with it child photographs from real life.

#### Exaggerated Common Traits

The most ordinary way in which a child shows individuality is in possessing some common trait in an

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exaggerated or a limited degree. Let us see how true this is.<sup>1</sup>

Is the shy child an anomaly? No; he simply has an unusually large amount of the fear common to helpless, ignorant childhood. No more is the so-called "bold child," over-confident and reckless, a monster, but he merely has less than the customary amount of fear. The deficient child is abnormally ignorant, and the precocious child develops prematurely. There are the same two extremes physically—the child who begins life more helpless than most infants, and the one who starts out with a great degree of strength.

The passionate child is overcharged, as it were, with the impulse of anger, and the spiritless child has scarcely enough to enable him to hold his own. There is the extremely imaginative child, who dreams dreams, and the matter-of-fact child whose vision is more nearly limited to things actually seen, although no child, fortunately, reaches the dead level of realism possible to adulthood.

The affectionate child has a strong love impulse, and occasionally we come across a child who seems entirely unloving. We say of one child, "She is a perfect little mimic," when the power of mimicry is highly developed. "Do watch me and try to do it just as I do," we beg of the child who is somewhat lacking in that regard.

The nervous child is an illustration of abnormal and the phlegmatic child of subnormal activity. The "little pig" has so keen a sense of self that there is absolutely little else, while the "generous dear" shows evidence of

<sup>1</sup>The best method to pursue with a class is to ask the members to mention some particular type of child and trace his chief characteristic to one common to childhood, as is done in the following paragraphs.

## CHILDREN AS INDIVIDUALS

outgrowing egoism somewhat earlier than most children. The destructive child may be the scientist in embryo, whose curiosity takes the practical form of trying to find out how things are made. On the other hand, the child who takes everything for granted and asks few questions has not enough of the inquiring tendency which leads to knowledge.

Thus it is intensely interesting to discover what general characteristics are prominent and what are inconspicuous in the children we know; to see how his salient characteristic gives a child a certain individuality; to realize how far removed, after all, is each individual child from that composite, "the child," which he has helped to form.

### Child Types

There are, besides, the more strikingly distinctive children, who fascinate or perhaps baffle us, well-versed in childhood-as-it-usually-is, by showing us childhood-as-it-occasionally-is.

I have a little girl friend who has always been a veritable coquette, affectionate one moment and unapproachable the next, sometimes courting my favor and again quite without cause frowning upon me, and combining the coyness of a maiden with the uncompromising frankness of a child. Who would exchange "the child" for this alluring personality?

There is the merry child, good-natured and sunny, who laughs his way into our hearts, and makes us forget the tragedies of this old world and decide that it's a pretty jolly place after all. Poor, correct "the child," where are you in contrast?

Then, alas, there is the child who "won't." Won't

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what? Never mind what—just won't anything. Do you pine then for "the child," and feel you have your fill of individuality? Ah, but can the satisfaction of dealing with a conventional child equal the joy of being able to change the "won't" to "will"? And behind the obstinacy lies often a wonderful capacity for loyalty and tenacious adherence to principle.

I once knew a child who surprised me continually by his quick perceptions and reasoning powers. He was healthy, fond of play and perfectly normal, except that he appeared to forget absolutely nothing he had heard, and instead of the usual credulity of childhood, reasoned things out for himself, formed quite remarkable opinions, and asked very thoughtful questions.

I know a little girl of five, who rarely asks a question when she can puzzle out the answer for herself. She has carefully mapped out the universe from the data given her, and her own explanations of the way things are managed are so evidently satisfactory to her, that she scorns to ask any one else's views. "How ——" she will begin, and then add immediately, "Oh, I know!" and give her own solution. With unfailing confidence everything is finally referred to God, and all mysteries explained by him.

Another child I know seems incapable of continuous attention. Her power of concentration is so limited that during a three-minute story she either wriggles and twists, plays with her hair ribbon, swings her feet, or tries to attract another child's notice. Her chief idea is to get the conversation into her own hands, when she will conduct a monologue as long as I will listen, darting from one subject to another in the most irrelevant manner.

## CHILDREN AS INDIVIDUALS

There is a child of my acquaintance who has always been brimming over with mischief. Her teasing propensity is enormous, and she frankly declares, "I like to be naughty." When she joins a group of children, there is certain to be dissension, and yet in spite of this she is popular, for she is enthusiastic and inventive in play, and though there may be friction, there is never stagnation when she is present.

Certain children, even at a very early age, take the initiative among their playmates and are real leaders. With this capacity for leadership is usually combined a slightly patronizing attitude toward younger children, which manifests itself in officious care and imparting information gratuitously. The small "boss" will brook no interference with his authority, and his petty tyrannies are ludicrously like those of an adult leader.

### Accurate Character Reading

It is very possible to be deceived in the type of child from appearances, unless one is a keen reader of child nature. A child may meet your most enthusiastic overtures without a particle of demonstration, and display no emotion at your pathetic tale. He may remain stolid through the songs, and appear to endure rather than enjoy representing a tree or a flower. Yet you may hear from his parents that he repeats nearly every word you have said, and find that his inanimate face is but a mask.

The child who laughs gleefully when you tell a pathetic story is not necessarily imbecile—he is simply amused over an unusual expression or gesture, and is thinking of that rather than of the tale. The child who bursts into tears easily may not be extremely emotional, but nervous from

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insufficient nourishment or sleep. The child who appears stupid may be merely shy. It does not follow that the child who wants to occupy the center of the stage and to answer every question and join in every occupation is brilliant. We must know them very well indeed—these puzzling children—before we clap on our labels.

After all, as we become really acquainted with the children, we do not regard them as types but as individuals—just Jack and Richard, Mary and Frances, with their own special combinations of characteristics which, together with an intangible something impossible to describe, make personality.

The study of childhood's general characteristics has made us more alert to discover peculiar traits, and the construction of "the child" has helped us to see the charm and fascination of individuality and recognize the responsibility of understanding it.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Name three distinguishing traits of individual children that are really only exaggerated general characteristics.
2. Name three distinguishing traits of individual children that are evidence of a smaller degree than customary of certain general characteristics.
3. Describe the particular type of child written about in "The Children of the Future," by Nora Archibald Smith, in the chapter entitled "A Dumb Devil," or in "An Unwalled City," or "Perilous Times."
4. What sort of behavior in a child may be contrary to his real character?
5. Describe a child you consider "difficult."
6. Write a short sketch of the child that particularly appeals to you.

## LESSON V

### A LITTLE CHILD'S RELIGION

*Everything in a child's surroundings should be interpreted religiously.—George Ellsworth Dawson*

#### Where It Is Found

Exactly what is your conception of religion? Let each member of the class give an offhand definition.<sup>1</sup> The ordinary use of the term would seem to exclude it from children's lives. At first thought a religious child is a monstrosity, and to connect religion with a child is like dressing him in miniature adult garments. Indeed, the religion that is taught children is too frequently of this kind—made up of adult thoughts, even though couched in child language. How many infant catechisms have been composed merely by simplifying words, and how we have attempted to reduce profound creeds to their lowest terms by modifying their phraseology!

Let us listen to that fearless disregarder of precedents, Friedrich Froebel, who calmly announces: "Education and Instruction shall from the very first be passive, observant, protective, rather than prescribing, determining, interfering. . . . Education is, simply, helping the Divine within us to come forth, to act." Can you not see the horrified amazement of those educators of his day who

<sup>1</sup>These replies will influence the discussion which will naturally grow out of them.

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were accustomed to use arbitrary methods of forcing knowledge into their pupils? Hear again the deliberate statement of a mature thinker: "There is nothing so natural to the unsophisticated human being as God." Listen once more to these words of a modern educator: "Those who accept this philosophy" [recognizing the value of the natural interests of children] "have always sought in the child the germs of religion."

Do you then think there is such a thing as natural religion? Are we actually to observe and protect the germs of religion in a child, and not force upon him a totally foreign theology? Men who have studied primitive races find them naturally religious. Plutarch says: "I have seen people without cities and organized government or laws, but people without shrines and deities I have not seen." So the little child, of whom primitive man is the prototype, early shows instincts that, I believe, are a groping after God. Isn't it an instinctive sense of the spirituality of the universe that makes him personify trees, stones, the rain, his playthings, even the furniture? By insistent questions he seeks the cause behind the wonders of nature. The idea that there is an invisible as well as a visible world seems natural to him.

Do you think that the observant and passive attitude Froebel advocates, protecting the child's instincts and answering his natural questions, would give him the religion he requires? Some one has said, "I believe a child has a native need for a theology, and that if he is not given one he will create it." Surely these unmistakable signs of interest indicate a vital longing that should be satisfied, and, as surely, we must find the clue to the little child's religion in himself.



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### How It Gives Satisfaction

Suppose, then, we regard the little child in the light of his characteristics, as we have discovered them, and see how they show both his need and his capacity. Consider, in the first place, his helplessness. We have agreed that it promotes family affection. Does it indicate any need besides that of parental care, which religion can supply?

George Hodges' definition of religion is this:—"Religion is human life plus God." Will it induce a feeling of confidence in this dependent little child to know of One who cares for his parents as well as himself? Will it not fill him with a sense of security, similar to that produced by the warm grasp of his father's hand and the assurance, "Mother will take care of you?" Finding that the answer to his queries as to the cause of things is God, he finally regards him as the author of all his blessings. His warm coat, his new suit, his good breakfast, his drink of water, the fire that warms him, the house he lives in, the pretty things that give him pleasure, even his own father and mother, without whom life would be inconceivable, all are gifts of the heavenly Father.

This is what Louise Seymour Houghton happily calls "God-consciousness." This is what Dr. Dawson means when he says, "Everything in a child's surroundings should be interpreted religiously." This is the natural path from the seen to the unseen, from the little child's life to the meaning of life.

That this brings infinite satisfaction, no one doubts who has seen the response in a child's face, as this "God-consciousness" takes possession of him. It was this that inspired my small Scotch laddie to say, in his deliberate fashion, as he looked about the Beginners' room one Sun-

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day, "Everything in this room—my new coat, your hat, the flowers on your table, the chairs, I guess the pictures, and the sunshine coming in the window—they all belong to God." And a sigh of perfect content followed.

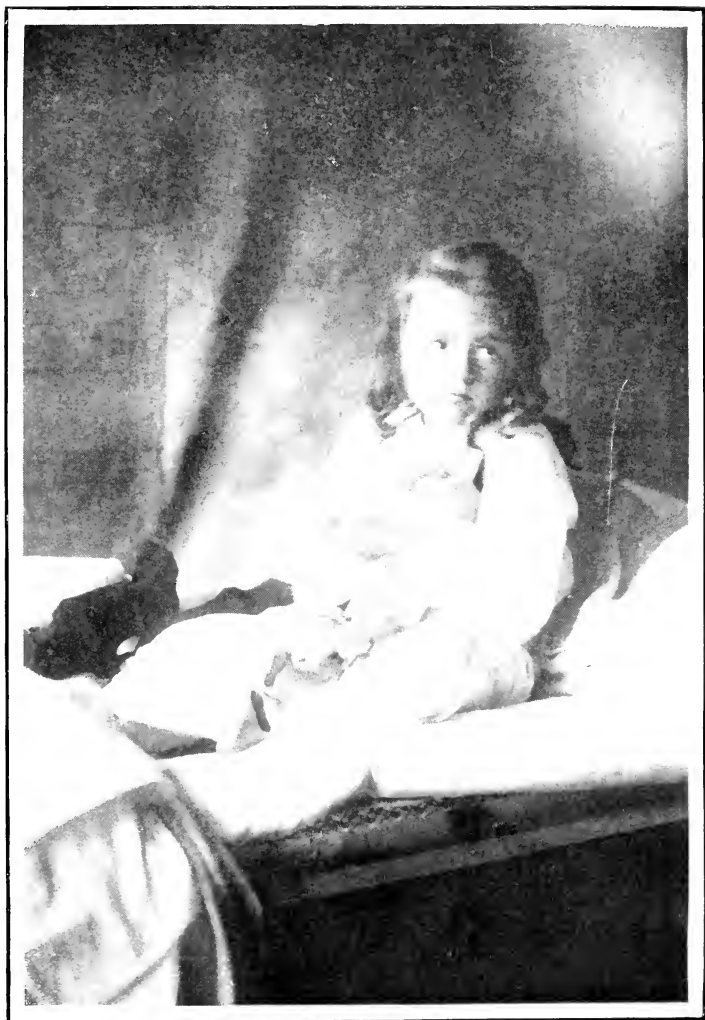
That this attitude induces love any one will affirm who has noticed the tone of a child's voice, as he says "Heavenly Father," or seen a small face light up, as did the four-year-old girl's, as she told her teacher, "I think to myself and I say to my mother, 'I wish I could *see* God.'"

### How It Lessens Fear

Ignorant as well as helpless, and therefore fearful, the little child revels in the knowledge that this world is not chaos, but that there is a Power behind, ordering and planning. The fact that one's mother is in the house gives the empty room a sense of being inhabited. The knowledge that God's sun is certain to rise in the morning and that his stars keep watch robs the night of its terrors. "I woke up once in the night, and I was afraid," a child said. "I was going to call my mother, but then I thought, 'Pooh! heavenly Father's taking care.' And I didn't."

Gradually increased knowledge will put ignorant fear to rout, but for a little child there can be no better first step toward quieting his terror than to help him feel what he is blindly groping toward—that there is a cause, a reason, One all-wise and all-powerful, who orders the universe, and plans for the daily needs of little children.

Gladly would we keep from the little child all knowledge of death, but it enters our homes, and forces its acquaintance upon them. Even this fear, which is more universal with little children than many people realize,



" I WOKE UP ONCE IN THE NIGHT, AND I WAS AFRAID "



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may be turned into glad anticipation by simply confirming the child's instinctive belief that life cannot cease, and picturing a wondrous "other home," prepared by the same loving heavenly Father. The interpretation of death, then, is the door of heaven, and I have heard more than one child speak in the most natural, joyous way of the time "when I go up to heaven."

### How the Child Reaches After It

The child's wondering curiosity is continually, as we have said, pleading for satisfactory answers. Can we do less than pay attention to these queries, and let our children see God behind the flower, the tree, the wind that blows and the sun that shines? God the Creator as well as God the Protector appeals to the little child, and is the answer to the class of questions which seek the cause of all that is. "God made it"; "It is the heavenly Father's plan" are satisfactory replies, and I have never known a child to be distressed when I admitted, "I do not know, but God knows."

It is also natural for children to try to trace all things back to their beginning. "Who made the very first bird?" they ask. "How did the first teacher who ever taught learn anything?" "What set on the first hen's egg?" Isn't it significant, this groping for a beginning? Shall we deny the child the answer he is seeking? For, as Dr. Dawson writes, "Parents and teachers help him to name his God, not to discover him." A little girl once asked, "When did heavenly Father live?" "Why, of course," I answered, "it must have been before the flowers, because he made them, and before —" "The leaves," she continued, "or the trees or the rain." "Or before the

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earth even," I said. Then she looked up at me with serious eyes. "Was God the beginning?" she said.

I often think of the incident related to me by a woman whose life had held much that was hard. "When I was a little girl," she said, "I criticized some of the old-fashioned columbines, and said I thought God might have made them hold up their heads. My busy mother left her baking to take me in her lap and say, impressively, 'Everything God makes is made in the very best way. You will find this true always.' Next day I came in with a May basket, the columbines arranged around the edge. 'See! they just fit,' I said. 'I'm glad God made their heads hang down.' That thoughtful explanation of my mother made an impression from which I have never recovered."

What can be more worth our time than to answer our children's wondering questions, and so lead them in this natural path to God!

### Of What It Consists

What conception will the little child form of the invisible God? Isn't it summed up in the title most appealing to childhood—the heavenly Father? The great principle of learning the unknown through the known lies at the base of this idea of God. Care, strength, love, wisdom—all these are personified to the little child in his parents, and so God will be to him a great Father, a loving Parent.

Curious are the fancies of children in regard to God, but those will be outgrown, and need not be a cause of distress. Children cannot understand spirit nor deal in abstractions, and if we remember that a child can know

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something of his father, in relation to himself, although he cannot appreciate all the qualities that make up his personality, we will see that in the same way a little child can know something of God, in his relation to himself, although he must grow gradually into a fuller knowledge of his attributes and nature.

There can hardly be love without communication, and a mere child may, wonderful as it seems, speak to God. This is what prayer should mean—a simple speaking to God, as to an earthly father. Any one who has observed the prayers of children will marvel at their implicit faith in his power and goodness and interest in their affairs, which leads often to naive accounts of little happenings.

Such prayers, with unforced expressions of thanks, or, more truly, of gladness for benefits received and simple songs of praise constitute the little child's worship—worship in its very simplest form, but containing the necessary elements of love and reverence.

And this "God-consciousness," after which he has instinctively been groping, with its natural response of love and trust, constitutes the little child's theology.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Review "The Child and His Religion," by George E. Dawson, chapter on "The Natural Religion of Children."
2. Give any instances you have known or read of a child showing evidences of relief or satisfaction or the lessening of fear at the idea of the loving, heavenly Father caring for him.
3. Give George Hodges' views in "The Training of Children in Religion," pages 18-24, 32-36.
4. Mention children's questions that you consider worthy serious answers.
5. Write out the ideas about God of children you know. Compare them with "Children's Ways," by James Sully, pages

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78-84, or "The Training of Children in Religion," by George Hodges, pages 40-43.

6. Compare your own knowledge of children's prayers with the chapter on "The Child's Religion," in "As the Twig Is Bent," by Susan Chenery.



## LESSON VI

### A LITTLE CHILD'S RELIGION (*continued*)

*What we make our children love and desire is more important than what we make them learn.—John Quincy Adams.*

#### Religion and Life

In the last lesson I asked you to define religion. To-day I want you to tell me, as briefly as possible, what is your aim in giving little children religious instruction, and just what you hope to accomplish.<sup>1</sup>

As we have already said, certain qualities in the little child indicate not alone specific needs, but an instinctive groping after One who shall satisfy these needs. The question now is, when we have helped the child to find God, have we done all that is sufficient? If we succeed in leading him to the Father, is that enough? Have we "interpreted his surroundings religiously," when we have opened his eyes to the vision that lies behind everything, and seen to it that he has entered into his heritage and knows himself to be a child of God?

Are the communication with God which we call

<sup>1</sup>If each member of the class tries to express this aim, it will help not only to clarify her own thought, but will assist the entire class to get a vision of the ideal aim. These statements will no doubt arouse a discussion quite unlike that suggested here.

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prayer, and the love we term devotion, and the thanksgiving we name worship—are even these enough? Give me freely your ideas on the subject. I believe a little child needs besides the consciousness that he is a child of God the desire to act as befits God's child. He should love God and also love the good. His worship should consist of service, as well as of prayer and praise. To "interpret his surroundings religiously" means more than to see God behind the material things about him. It means also to be Godlike in each daily act. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" is an important part of a little child's religion.

### **What Are Religious Activities**

Suppose we again consider some of the little child's prominent characteristics, and see how they indicate his need and capacity for this so-called "practical religion."

In the first place, what should you say his active nature demanded of his religion? One can imagine a hermit or a pain-worn saint finding cheer and comfort in a purely contemplative religion. How about an active child? Doesn't this very activity necessitate service? Somebody has said, "Is it true that there is nothing after disease, indigence, and a sense of guilt so fatal to health and to life itself as the want of a proper outlet for active faculties?" Let us guard and guide the natural, God-given activity of our children, for in it is the germ of the religion of Christ, preeminently the religion of service.

And service is meant in its very broadest sense. We wish our children to feel that life is not divided sharply into the secular and the divine, but that it is all one, and

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every act is religious. We shall thus be building up a generation of men and women who will consider not only attending church a religious duty but attending to their diet, and who will feel that service should be rendered God, not one, but seven days a week.

To take up this matter very practically, will you discuss the following questions: Which have you found more effective in controlling children's activities, the command "do" or "do not"? What legitimate physical activity in the Beginners' Department will prevent annoying activity? Do you think Froebel's great principle of learning through doing important? Do little children enjoy helping their mothers? What may be the effect of ignoring or refusing their offers of assistance? Can love for God be made an incentive for right daily acts?

### Guiding Natural Instincts

A child's mind is as active as his body. In the last lesson we spoke of the danger in leaving serious questions unanswered. Suppose we have fulfilled our duty in regard to our children's curiosity, have we any duty toward the instincts of imitation and imagination? As through his physical activity he finds the road of service, so through his mental activity he gains knowledge, and also, by means of imitation and imagination he gets—what? Through imitation I think he acquires a sense of other people's natures and activities, and through imagination he is able to put himself in their places. By fancying himself in some as yet unexperienced circumstances, he also forms ideals of conduct.

Recognizing this inherent quality of imitation, shall we fight it, or leave it alone, or guide it? Drummond

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

asks, "Is corn to grow by method and character by caprice?" How would one's attempt to guide children's power of imitation influence the sort of things we let them see? hear? the stories we tell them? our own actions? Will it enter at all into our reason for telling them about Jesus? Will their impressionable senses make care necessary?

Can we in a similar way help the imagination to do its full work upon our children's characters? How will our stories cultivate it? Does imagination help to make hardships bearable? What effect do imaginary plays have upon our children? I have seen in a tiny girl's face the dawn of the maternal feeling, as she rocked her doll to sleep; I have seen a little boy knight possessing for the time being real knightly qualities; and a child cannot enter fully into the impersonation of a bird without gaining something in tenderness toward bird life.

### Arousing Desire Through Love

Thus the proper outlet of his activities, both physical and mental, gradually lead a child away from absorption in himself to interest in and service for others. We appreciate that it was an absolute necessity for him to begin life with his own physical needs foremost, but surely our ultimate ideal for him is the Christ ideal of self-sacrifice.

This very interest in others may lead to manifestations of the unrestrained anger we have discussed. But if a little boy shows hot resentment at injustice to his brother, shall we decry the feeling? And does not the newly

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aroused interest in others coupled with the desire to please them lead to obedience and self-control?

In short, we must consider carefully the child's natural characteristics to help him be most completely a child of God. And the guiding star to our goal is the little child's love. For "What we make our children love and desire is more important than what we make them learn."

Just as we present God as a loving Father, who cares for little children, and thus induce their love and wish to please him, so would we present goodness as something altogether desirable, for, though we may otherwise arbitrarily exact certain acts, we have not prepared them to face life. Not that we do not expect they must often perform hard duties, but I believe there must be the incentive of loving desire to insure a permanent growth toward goodness.

As their little acts of helpfulness lead them into the lives of others, sympathy will be aroused, and they will begin their first tiny self-sacrifices impelled by the great dynamo, love—love of God, and the wish to cooperate with him in caring for flowers and birds; love of parents, and the desire to please them by carrying out their wishes; love of neighbors, and thus the birth of the missionary spirit, which in its essence is helping those in need.

Nor, in taking account of a child's natural characteristics in helping him to live his life religiously, must we fail to consider his individuality. Thus one child needs much help toward self-control, another toward unselfishness, a third toward good-temper. We need to make obedience seem very desirable to one child and generosity to another.

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### The Result

In Maeterlinck's remarkable play, "The Bluebird," two children go on a quest for happiness, typified by the bluebird. After a fruitless search for it in the land of memory, the region of the dead, the realm of night, and the land of the yet unborn, they finally return to their humble cottage, and find, as they lend their pet bird to a neighbor's sick child, that it is the bluebird, and to their amazed delight discover happiness in their own home. They find a new meaning in the fire that warms them, the water they drink, the milk, the sugar, the common loaf, all of which were personified on their journey.

If we succeed in interpreting our little children's surroundings religiously, they will find happiness in their lives as they are, and a wonderful meaning in their every-day blessings, and as they use these common things in the service of others, they, too, will have captured the bluebird.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Write a review of "Love and Law in Child Training," by Emilie Poulsson, pages 83-89, or "A Study of Child Nature," by Elizabeth Harrison, chapter I.
2. Describe some efficient methods of directing the activities of children in Sunday school.
3. Report "A Study of Child Nature," by Elizabeth Harrison, chapter on "The Instinct of Imitation."
4. Explain how certain imaginative plays affect children's characters, and how play is used in the kindergarten.
5. Do you agree with George Hodges, in "The Training of Children in Religion," chapter I?
6. Give your ideas on systematic plans for every-day religious activities. See "The Child and His Religion," by George E. Dawson, pages 117 and 118.

## LESSON VII

### A LITTLE CHILD'S LESSONS

*I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it.—Paul the Apostle*

#### The Ideal Curriculum

“What” is a far easier question to answer than “how.” Having decided what a little child’s religion ought to be, the problem is how to be sure that he has it. Shall we depend only upon answering his thoughtful questions? Most of us find that such questions are asked more often in the home than at Sunday school. Can we be sure of his parents’ helpful answers? Even where there is careful home training in religion, is there the same advantage in little children from many homes meeting together in a Beginners’ class, that there is in their attending day kindergarten?

If there is a Beginners’ department, it seems safe to say that a definite curriculum is necessary, that the teaching may most effectively meet the children’s needs, and also that such a curriculum must be elastic enough to be adapted to local conditions.

In deciding upon a course of lessons for little children, we should be certain first that it is founded upon sound principles. What do you think of a course frankly intended to be a study of the Bible? the learning of a cate-

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chism that sets forth certain theological doctrines? What should be the basis of such a course? It certainly should be based upon the child's needs, and aim to give him the religion he is instinctively groping after.

Have little children any sense of time? Does this form any objection to a chronological course? Should the lessons be concrete or abstract? If the course consists of stories, and these stories are not arranged chronologically, should there be any sequence? Should the stories be entirely from the Bible; may Bible passages be simply the basis for stories, such as nature stories; or do you feel that the child's needs occasionally demand a story quite outside the Bible? Do you, then, all agree that the ideal curriculum for little children is a topical story course, based upon a child's needs?

### **Examination of Different Courses**

I wonder how many of the class have examined other courses of lessons than the one they are using. Have any of you attempted to outline a course, embodying the principles you believe in? Both these things are helpful. A critical examination of various lesson courses leads one to adopt the best, although it may be with modifications, and gives one breadth and independence of judgment. The endeavor to outline an original course clarifies one's own ideas, and makes criticism of existing courses more discriminating and the critic better aware of the difficulties in the way.

Among the Beginners' courses worthy consideration are the following: Kindergarten Course of Study from "An Outline of a Bible-School Curriculum," by George William Pease; "One Year of Sunday-school Lessons for



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Young Children," by Florence U. Palmer; "Bible Lessons for Little Beginners," by Margaret J. Cushman Haven. It is suggested that the courses themselves be first examined, rather than any development of them.

### The International Beginners' Course

The Beginners' Course of the International Graded Lessons is considered here, as one of the latest series of lessons for children of four and five years. It is a topical story course, covering two years. The second year is not advanced in grade over the first, for with such young children it is considered unwise to use two sets of lessons, as the same thought needs to be carried through the entire hour.

Let us examine first the list of themes taken up, to see if they give the little child the right sort of religion.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Themes for the First Year:*

- I. The Heavenly Father's Care.
- II. Thanksgiving for Care.
- III. Thanksgiving for God's Best Gift.
- IV. Love Shown Through Care.
- V. The Loving Care of Jesus.
- VI. God's Care of Life.
- VII. Our Part in the Care of Flowers and Birds.
- VIII. Duty of Loving Obedience.
- IX. Love Shown by Prayer and Praise.
- X. Love Shown by Kindness (to Those in the Family Circle).

<sup>1</sup>It is suggested that the teacher of the class write the themes on the blackboard, those for the two years in opposite columns, one theme at a time, so that the sequence can be anticipated or another suggested by the members.

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### XI. Love Shown by Kindness (to Those Outside the Family).

#### *Themes for the Second Year:*

- XII. Our Heavenly Father's Protection.
- XIII. Thanksgiving for Protection.
- XIV. Thanksgiving for God's Best Gift.
- XV. Our Heavenly Father's Protection in Nature.
- XVI. God Helping to Protect.
- XVII. Jesus the Helper and Saviour.
- XVIII. Jesus Teaching to Pray.
- XIX. God's Gift of Life.
- XX. God's Gift of the Wind, Sun and Rain.
- XXI. Jesus Teaching How to Help.
- XXII. Children Helping.
- XXIII. Friendly Helpers.

#### Instances of

1. Individual help.
2. Interchange of help.
3. Cooperation in helpfulness.

### Fall and Winter Themes

The course begins in October, and the first six or seven weeks of each year are covered by the subject of the heavenly Father's care and protection, approached through parental care. Is this something close to the child? Froebel says, "This feeling of community, first uniting the child with mother, father, brothers and sisters, and resting on a higher spiritual unity to which later on is added the unmistakable discovery that father, mother, brothers, sisters, human beings in general, feel and know themselves to be in community and unity with a higher

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principle—with humanity, with God . . . is the very first germ of all true religious spirit, of all genuine yearning for unhindered unification with the eternal, with God.”

What effect will the consciousness of a protecting and care-taking Father have upon a child's fears? his sense of helplessness? his wonder? Under this theme are stories of parental care and God's care in nature. Do you think it increases a child's sense of God's loving-kindness to know that he provides for beast and bird and blossom as well as for him?

At this time the Thanksgiving festival draws near. Are Thanksgiving and Christmas of importance in a child's year? Will lessons on God's care prepare him in any measure for Thanksgiving? What will be his natural response to the realization of God's wonderful care? What, then, will logically be the next theme? Would “Thanksgiving for Care (or Protection)” mean that thanks are to be forced from the child? Is this possible? Of what does a little child's gratitude consist? Might love and gladness be a better term?

Christmas, another great festival, comes soon after Thanksgiving. Do you think it is possible for a little child to regard the baby Jesus as a gift of the same Father who has given other blessings? Does the topic, “Thanksgiving for God's best Gift,” seem appropriate for the Christmas season?

After this theme comes in the first year, “Love Shown through Care,” and in the second year the two themes, “Our Heavenly Father's Protection” and “God Helping to Protect.” Here the impression of God's care is deepened, and that care in the world of nature particularly emphasized. The child is given a glimpse of his own

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responsibility in giving care, and helped to feel the joy of cooperating with God. Do you think that this sense of cooperation may give a child a feeling of over-importance, or will it be an incentive to helpfulness?

### Lessons about Jesus

Is it enough to tell the children the Christmas stories, and let them know only of the baby Jesus? If you tell about the man Jesus, is there danger that they may confuse him with the Father? Do you care if they do? What special phase of Jesus' nature will appeal to them and fit in with the general themes of the lessons? Cannot Jesus become their ideal of a man who protects and cares for others? Do you think that while his power and teaching can mean little or nothing to them, his kindness and love for the small and weak may win their real love? I believe that even such little children can truly say, "I love Jesus." I believe it is possible for them to so catch the Christ spirit from the stories they hear of him, that they are really Christians, as far as it lies within a child's power to be.

After these lessons on "The Loving Care of Jesus" and "Jesus the Helper and Saviour" comes the third great festival—Easter. What should Easter mean to little children? Ought they to hear of Christ's death and resurrection? What do you think of this as a theme for the Easter season—"God's Care of Life," covering the awakening of life in nature, and the preservation of life not only on earth but in heaven? Would such a theme tend to counteract the fear of death many children have, or is it better never to refer to death?

Spring is a season when the outdoor world is especially

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appealing to a child. Do you wish your children to see the Creator behind the springtime wonders? What nature subjects are appropriate to this season? The spring themes suggested in this course are "God's Gift of the Wind, Sun, and Rain," and "Our Part in the Care of Flowers and Birds."

### Praying and Doing

Do you believe children ought to be taught anything about prayer, or is it enough simply to teach them to pray? Will it help them to become worshipful to hear stories of people who pray? Besides stories that bring in prayer incidentally, the course has the themes, "Love Shown by Prayer and Praise" and "Jesus Teaching to Pray."

This seems to me the logical place in the course for taking up as topics some of the virtues possible to childhood. For why should our children know of God's love, if not to help them to be Godlike? The consciousness of a world for which God cares, and in which Jesus served, should inspire them to do their part.

What good qualities should you choose to group stories about? Is obedience necessary and possible to childhood? kindness? helpfulness? You will look in vain in this course for missionary themes—that is, studies of missionary enterprise in other lands. But isn't the essence of the missionary spirit the desire to help those weaker and more needy? And are not the first steps toward a child's interest in people all over the world the interest and love for the members of his family and neighborhood, shown in little deeds of helpfulness? You may be asked by those zealous in the temperance

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cause whether temperance teaching can begin too early, and you can certainly answer that the foundation of a temperate life is self-control learned through obedience.

Thus each year of this course of lessons ends with the endeavor to help little children to be good in their own childlike way.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Name the necessary qualifications for an ideal Beginners' course of lessons.

2. Report on some other Beginners' curriculum than that discussed here.

3. Give your opinion as to whether the themes of the International Beginners' Course give the little child the religion he needs.

4. Consider carefully a group of stories in this course, and be ready next week to comment upon their desirability.<sup>1</sup>

5. Make a list of the Bible verses for the children, and tell whether you consider them within their comprehension.

6. Count the stories retold, and state whether they seem to you too few or too many.

<sup>1</sup> Prospectuses of the International Beginners' Course, containing full lesson material, will be sent from the publishers on request.

## LESSON VIII

### THE VALUE OF THE STORY

*The child's thirst for stories—has it no significance, and does it not lay a responsibility upon us?—Walter L. Hervey*

#### Teaching Through the Story

Obviously lessons for children cannot consist only of themes, however necessary of presentation these themes may be. Suppose you had only an outline course of topics, how would you set to work to teach? Would you talk about the subjects—God's Care, Thanksgiving, Obedience and the rest? Would you attempt to define them? Perhaps you would deliver sermonettes? or teach Bible verses clarifying them? Must you have some lesson material under these topics, and if so, what form would this material naturally take?

For instance, choose among the following statements the one you feel would best introduce the subject of obedience.

Every child ought to obey his father and mother.

To obey anybody is to do exactly as he says.

My child, obey your dear parents.

"Children, obey your parents."

I have a story to tell you of a baby rabbit that did not mind his mother, and what happened.

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

Why is it that the last method is the most effective? I should like each member of the class to give one reason why the story is a valuable educational agency for little children.<sup>1</sup>

### Choosing the Story

If we are to use stories for the religious education of children, what kind shall we choose? Is there any requisite source for such stories? any necessary qualifications? Certainly they are told because of the truth in them—for the sake of the message they convey. Must these stories, therefore, be true, in the sense that they are the relation of facts? Can you see how truth may be conveyed by means of a tale not literally true? Do you see a difference between fact and truth? How do the parables of Jesus illustrate such a use of stories?

The stories we select may present the required truth and still be inappropriate, unless they are adapted to the age of the children. If we like to talk learnedly, we say they must be "on the child's plane," which means simply—what? That any story, in order to fulfil its mission, must be within the child's understanding. It must deal either with situations he has experienced or which he is capable of imagining. Its message must not only be a message suitable for a child, but told in child language in a child's way, so that a child will respond.

### Proof of Its Value

In that word "respond" we find the actual test of the value of the story. Exactly what do we mean by the

<sup>1</sup> These answers will determine the succeeding discussion.



## THE VALUE OF THE STORY

child's response? Is it his absorbed attention? Do you regard his bated breath, intense gaze and tense absorption a certain proof that the story you have told has value? Can you conceive of an absolutely valueless story holding the attention? Give a possible instance.

Is the proof of a story's value to be found in the facility with which the child retells it? May he, by any chance, remember and reproduce a totally valueless tale? On the other hand, does any story perform its function which neither arouses interest nor makes an impression that is retained? Might a story of unquestionable worth be reproduced in a way to show that it had failed to bring its message to the child? For example, suppose you told a story to illustrate obedience, and the child retold it in detail, but very apparently failed to grasp the point, might the story be considered a failure? Would not a retelling, with the point well brought out, be a proof that the story had delivered its message to the child?

We must remember, however, that many little children have neither the vocabulary nor the confidence to reproduce a story, and so their response cannot be judged in this way. Do you find the expressed response common? No teacher need feel in the least discouraged at the infrequency of quotable responses from little children, whose power of expression is undeveloped, and whose feeling is more apt to show itself in wondering eyes and facial expression than in words. A little child's response may more often be felt than heard. Have your children made any comments after hearing a story that have led you to believe it had reached its mark? A delightful response to a story is a child's request for a song embodying his feeling and occasionally the suggestion of a prayer.

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### The Little Child's Response

Some interesting responses to certain stories are the following:—

A little girl, telling about Jacob's dream, said, in an indescribably tender voice, "The heavenly Father said, 'Don't you be afraid, Jacob; I'm keeping care of you. Don't you be afraid; I'm keeping care.'"

After telling the story, "Jesus Loving Little Children," a teacher said, "We cannot put our arms about Jesus' neck or feel his hand upon our heads, as those long-ago children did, but we can speak to him, and we will now." A little girl suggested softly, "We might make believe put our arms round his neck while we do." The prayer that followed was a very real one.

A young teacher had finished telling the story of "Jesus and the Blind Man." How she told it may be guessed from the comment of one of the children,—“I think the dogs must have been running around the streets looking for Jesus, he was so kind.”

After the story, "Joseph's Coat of Many Colors," as the children gathered about the picture, one little boy put his arm about his younger brother and said, "I'd never, never be so mean to my brother. I never, never would." This was a spontaneous response to a negative lesson.

### The Analysis of Stories

For the remainder of the time let us consider some particular stories of the International Beginners' Course that you have been studying, as to their value in the religious education of young children.

Suppose we begin with the first group of

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stories, under the theme, "The Heavenly Father's Care." The first story emphasizes parental care, the second parental care in nature, the third the great necessity of divine care, in order that parental care be possible among birds or animals, and the remaining stories bring out the important part that the heavenly Father plays in human affairs. Exactly what phase of God's care does each one of these stories present?

Again, let us take up each story from the standpoint of its source. Five out of the seven stories are from the Bible, the casual observer would say, and the other two are not. It should be noted, however, that these so-called nature stories are founded upon Bible verses, and serve to make their meaning concrete, and also that the child is continually demanding such nature stories by his questionings. Discuss your conviction in regard to the importance of nature stories, and also your feeling about the value of stories from the Bible.

Let us also take up these stories from the point of view of their appropriateness to the child. Test each story in these ways:—

Does it teach a truth that meets a child's religious need? State the truth.

Does it teach this truth simply and directly?

Does it deal with situations within the child's experience? If not, with those he can readily imagine?

Is there action enough to arouse interest? Is this action involved in too much detail?

For example, take the story of the baby Moses. What

'In the "Beginners' Teachers' Text-Book" each theme and its illustrating stories are carefully discussed. It is far better, however, for the class to form their own opinion before reading those discussions, and then frankly compare the two.

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truth does it teach? Is this truth necessary for a child's highest development? Does it teach this so obviously that the child cannot escape it? Might similar experiences occur in the child's life? Does this prohibit the story from the child's imagination? Does it particularly matter whether the child knows just what a king is? Why has this story always made a special appeal to children. Is it simple? overburdened with detail? full of action?<sup>1</sup>

### The Charm of the Familiar

After we have set our standard high, as to the kind of stories we should choose for our children, we must not fail to recognize the fact that it is the twice-told tale which really appeals to a little child. If we give him his choice as to what we shall tell him, it will almost invariably be the familiar tale. "Tell it again," is his highest praise. The charm of the well-known and well-beloved is so alluring to him that only one very, very far from childhood will provide the new to the exclusion of the old. This fact will enable us to drop out the least worth while among the stories we examine, and bring to him only the best, but those over and over and over again.

For the value of the story lies not alone in its message, in its appeal to childhood, or in its ability to touch a responsive chord, but also in its power to live through repetition, to endure through familiarity. And one who offers the fine gift of a story but once does not understand the heart of a child,—only she who is eager to enjoy that gift with him again and again and yet again.

<sup>1</sup> As many other stories may be taken up in like fashion as time permits. Such analytical work is extremely helpful.

## THE VALUE OF THE STORY

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. State your reasons for believing the story a valuable teaching agency for little children.
2. Do you agree with Edward P. St. John's views, in "Stories and Story-Telling," chapter on "The Story-Interests of Childhood"?
3. Name the essential characteristics of a story suitable for the religious education of children.
4. Give a concrete proof of the value of two particular stories.
5. Review "Telling Bible Stories," by Louise Seymour Houghton, chapter I, on "The Old Testament and the Child."
6. Analyze a favorite child's Bible story to find reasons for its popularity, and tell how many times it might profitably occur in a two-years' course.

## LESSON IX

### HOW TO TELL A STORY

*You must see what you say.—Sara Cone Bryant*

#### **A Story-Teller's Qualifications**

It requires little argument to persuade teachers of the value of stories in a child's religious education. Indeed, it is delightful to feel that one is privileged to offer such fascinating educational material—as alluring as inviting children to a feast of sweets. Our teaching is made easy because we have outgrown the old notion of drawing a strict dividing line between the child's need and his desire, and are learning to minister to his need through his desire.

However, the appropriate and effective kind of story may be decided upon, its style, length and appeal all suitable to the child's capacity, and yet the teacher will be left with a problem—how to tell it. For a poor story-teller may spoil a good story, and, on the other hand, “when you make the story your own and tell it, the listener gets the story plus your appreciation of it.”

It is very common to hear one who tells stories well called a “born story-teller.” This is a peculiarly comforting appellation to a certain type of person, who insists she was not born with this or that talent, when the truth is that she was born lazy. Story-telling is, to be sure, far easier to those who have a natural aptitude for it,

## HOW TO TELL A STORY

but without time and labor this aptitude will not produce a fine story-teller. It is also true that many a teacher who feels that for her story-telling is an impossible art may become very proficient if she is willing to devote herself heartily to the task of learning how.

There are, however, some indispensable qualifications. In the first place, a successful story-teller must know and love her audience. For how can you interest children unless you are able to put yourselves in their places, and how can you know them unless you possess the only key that will unlock their hearts—the key of love? With these two qualifications you are equipped to prepare yourselves for your audience—an audience, by the way, eager and expecting to be pleased, and disappointed if they are not.

### Guides to Story-Telling

If, then, you have chosen an appropriate story for the audience you know and love, how shall you tell it? In the first place, as only those who know and love a story can tell it. What child will hang on your words, when you are uncertain over the outcome? If you correct yourselves or hesitate, the children's attention is gone, for you have shown that the story is not your own possession, and that therefore you cannot make a gift of it. Your own appreciation of your tale is also a necessity, if you would gain their appreciation.

The suggestions in regard to one's manner of telling stories are so many and so diverse as to discourage and bewilder a novice. "Never raise your voice; be calm and use no gestures," one advises. "Be animated and dramatic; act out your story," say another. "Always begin with a cheerful smile," pleads a third.

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

I advise you to cast all these recommendations to the winds, and simply be yourselves. For, though a certain type of teacher may hold her children without a single gesture, with a quiet voice and scarcely changing expression, if another teacher, naturally more animated, should endeavor to suppress herself, she would meet with a total loss of attention and interest. And it may as well be acknowledged that the cheerful smile, when planned for, is as much scorned by our keen little critics as any other affectation. Be yourselves by forgetting yourselves. Forget even your children, if you can, in your absorption in your story. Then manner, voice, gestures and what not will adjust themselves and take their proper places as means to an end—that end making the gift of your story.

That it be a worthy gift we have before stipulated, which of course means that it must be told in language that will not cheapen it—simple but good English. It must be tricked out daintily, as a precious gift should be, with fascinating repetitions so dear to a child's heart, and with the moral pervading it instead of being tacked on in unsightly fashion, or wrapped up so that it cannot be readily found. Amateur story-tellers will win greatest success by at first following closely well-constructed and well-written stories, before venturing to adapt tales themselves.

Sara Cone Bryant discovered the secret of the real story-teller when she said, "You must *see* what you *say*." She might have added, "You must *feel* what you *say*." This is the secret of the preacher, the lecturer, the actor. Only as you live in your story can you give it to others.

This is more possible than the average person imagines.



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Confronted with a long story, it may seem a well-nigh hopeless task to one unskilled. For this reason far less discouraging to a beginner than to tell an entire story for criticism is to try to make a single incident her own. If you can make us see one object, you are obviously capable of making us see a series of objects. If you can make us experience one emotion, you can arouse within us others. So I suggest several little experiments, as first steps in story-telling, simply to test you, as to whether you can make others see and feel what you say.

### Story-Telling Tests

I want somebody to describe a tree so that I shall see it grow. You have perfect freedom to do so in any way you like. The point is to *make* me see the tree grow.<sup>1</sup>

Describe a giant to me, as if I were a child who does not know the meaning of the word. Make me realize a giant's tallness and largeness.

Tell me about an animal, so that I shall have some feeling toward it. Make me like it or hate it or fear it. If you have no feeling in regard to the animal you describe, neither shall I. Unless you can inspire in me some feeling toward it, you have not made me see that animal.

Now, I want you to make me see a boy run down the street. Would you use the dramatic method in this in-

<sup>1</sup>This has been done in such a class by a word-picture of the gradual growth of an oak from an acorn—the descriptive method; by kneeling down to represent a seed in the earth, and raising the body gradually, imitating growth, till it is erect, the arms stretched out for branches, the fingers fluttering leaves—the dramatic method; rapid sketches of trees in various stages of growth—the illustrative method. These methods, however, should only be suggested as a last resort, the original idea of the class being far better.

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stance? The illustrative method? How will you do it? Yes, you instinctively hurry your words, to give the impression of swift motion. How, in a similar way, would you tell about a boy walking very, very slowly? What could you do to give your listeners a chance to stop, mentally, and watch the boy run? Couldn't you say, "He ran and he ran and he ran," or "Oh! how fast he ran"?

Who can tell about the blowing of the wind, so that I shall feel cold? If you cannot do this by description, see if gestures or imitation of the sound of the wind will help.

Make me hear the rain falling. Describe the falling of the rain so that I shall be glad.<sup>1</sup>

Tell about a child eating his dinner. What must you do to make this vivid? Your small listeners want details. "A mother brought her child some good food" does not give the picture that arises when you say, "A mother brought her child a bowl of bread and milk and a red apple."

Can you fill me with the joy of a bird's spring song? If you cannot imitate the notes, can you tell me how his little throat swells and how he seems to love his song?

Describe a bear so that I shall realize its size. Tell me that a lamb called to its mother. Would you say, "It called and called" or "It bleated"? How can you make the cry more vivid?

For the next lesson we will continue these tests of our

<sup>1</sup> The rain may be imitated by tapping one's chair or imitating through the words, *PITTER, PATTTER*. An account of a drought and the beneficial results of the rain that followed, or of a little boy's delight that he can splash about in his rubber boots will illustrate the next point.

## HOW TO TELL A STORY

power, and listen also to some entire stories told by volunteers for our criticism and help.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. What are the essential qualifications of a successful story-teller?
2. Give your ideas about method and manner in story-telling.
3. Make a list of the points in "How to Tell Stories to Children," by Sara Cone Bryant, chapter IV.
4. State in a sentence what is the real secret of story-telling.
5. Speak of some tests used to make incidents vivid, and analyze the methods employed.
6. Prepare a story to tell before the class for criticism.

## LESSON X

### PRACTISE IN STORY-TELLING

*If you fail see why you fail, and then lay the foundation for success. Listen to others that know how to do it. Catch their points of effectiveness. Above all things, practise, practise, practise!—Amos R. Wells*

#### **The Secret of the Art**

Today we continue our practise in story-telling. It is an art so fine that we cannot take too great pains to perfect ourselves in it. And the reward of our labor is satisfactory. It is found in the absorbed attention, the wondering eyes, and the happy sighs of the children to whom we tell our stories.

Some of you have come prepared to tell stories for our criticism. Before you tell them I want volunteers from the class to try more of the simple tests for making pictures vivid that I suggested last week. For remember, "It is not the story in the lesson quarterly that you can build into the lives of your child; it is the story in you."

Marie Shedlock, a story-teller whose power of making words live is remarkable, won the following comments from a playground audience:

"Is she a fairy or a lady?" one child asked. "She made me see fairies awful plain."

"I always knew Pandora was a nice story," said another child, "but she never seemed like a live girl before."

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Another admirer remarked, "I liked 'The Bramin, the Jackal and the Tiger' best. Gee! but couldn't you see the tiger pace when she was saying the words!"

"I love 'The Little Tin Soldier,'" said still another. "Didn't she make him march fine?"

So you see how you have the opportunity of giving a favorite old tale fresh attractiveness by your manner of telling it.

### **Making Words Live**

Tell me that a little girl is sick so that I shall be sorry. You may do so in a single sentence or more at length. Do not try this until you feel just what it means for a rosy-cheeked, chubby, play-loving child to suffer.

Tell me that a mother is tired, so that I shall long to help her. Tell me what she has done to get tired, if you like, or how the weariness affects her. What you must do, if that tired mother is to mean anything to me, is to arouse my sympathy.

Now I will ask for something harder. Describe the shining of the sun, so that I shall feel glad. It is easier for most people to inspire others with sadness than with joy. By words, or drawings, or in any other way you can think of, make me glad because God's sun is filling the world with light and warmth.

Who can describe children playing, so that I shall feel some of the pleasure they experience? Perhaps you can even make me long to play.

### **Telling Bible Stories**

Let us turn now to some of the Bible stories. I want you to tell parts of these to me, as if I were a child. In

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order to tell me even a part of such a story so that I shall see and feel it, you must get into touch with the characters, so that for you they live, and you must realize the incidents you relate.

Think about the story of the flood, and picture to yourselves the dreary days spent floating upon a world of water. Think what sunshine and the possibility of stepping upon the earth must have meant to Noah and his family. Now I want somebody to say, "They came out into the fresh, clean, bright, shining world." You need not necessarily say these exact words. Turn the sentence about, if it is more natural to you, or use other words to give the idea—anything to make it your own expression. Only somehow you must make me feel what Noah felt.

Think now of Jesus and the nobleman whose son was sick. I want you to feel the tender sympathy Jesus felt, when he saw the father's worried face, and heard him say, "Come down before my child dies!" Tell me that Jesus longed to help him, so that I may feel how much, how very much, he longed to help.

I want you to think about Jacob, and how, at night, far away from his home, he fell asleep, under the stars, with a stone for a pillow. He had supposed himself quite alone. I want you to say what God said to him in a dream, so that I shall feel all that this profound truth would mean to Jacob the rest of his life. I will write the words on the board,—“I am with thee. I will not leave thee.”

Picture the disciples fishing in vain that night on the sea. Tell me how they threw their nets over into the water and pulled them in empty, again and again and yet

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again. Would gesture be appropriate here? I have known children to go through the motions spontaneously, when retelling the story. How would you show that the nets were at last full of fishes?

Now think of Mary, of her sweet modesty, her purity, her goodness. Express the wonder she must have felt at the promise that she should be the mother of the Saviour. "To think that this wonderful thing should happen to me!"<sup>1</sup>

### Telling Stories for Criticism

Is it necessary, in order to get the best results from a story, to create a good atmosphere before telling it? Are such devices as these useful—to listen to find out whether the clock is ticking; to go to sleep and wake up when I say, "Once upon a time"; a few soft chords on the piano?

We will now hear the stories that you have prepared. We will all listen without interruption, and give you our undivided attention. At the close we will criticize each story in the following ways.<sup>2</sup>

1. Is it a story worth telling?
2. What is its message?
3. Is this truth well brought out?
4. Is the story simple?
5. Is it within the children's comprehension?
6. Was it told as if it were well liked?
7. Was it perfectly known by the teller?

<sup>1</sup> Further illustrations may be used, if there is time.

<sup>2</sup> Even severe criticism need not be discouraging, if the good as well as the bad points are noted, and if it is made for the sake of improvement, and is not merely destructive.

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8. What were the good points in the telling?
9. What were the bad points?
10. Discuss both.

Will anybody tell us one of the stories already told, or another, as if we were children who know little English? How will this influence your choice of words? your method? Shall you be more dramatic? May a gesture sometimes explain a word?

Next week I want you to come prepared to tell Bible or nature stories, such as one would use in Sunday school.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Suggest some original tests for making words live.
2. Suggest parts of Bible stories for practise in vivid story-telling.
3. By what means can a good atmosphere for story-telling be created?
4. Write out what you consider your own strong and weak points as a story-teller.
5. How many opportunities have you had this week to tell stories to children? Might you have made more?
6. Prepare a Bible or nature story to tell next week for criticism.



## LESSON XI

### BUILDING THE PROGRAM—THE STORY PERIOD

*Let all things be done decently and in order.—Paul the Apostle*

#### One Essential

Is a program necessary, if we are to make the best use of our Sunday-school hour, or will it curb the child's liberty too much and destroy spontaneous sequence of thought? Will it, on the other hand, tend to give emphasis to the most important things? If we are to have a program, must it be elastic? Certainly otherwise it will be a hindrance rather than a help.

I want you to put out of your minds any preconceived ideas you may have of the program for a Beginners' session, so that we may discuss it in a fresh and unprejudiced fashion. Even in such a mechanical matter as the program, let us keep close to the little child's needs. These needs should determine the program, instead of the program being adapted to the child's needs.

We have already decided upon certain religious truths that are necessary to little children. We are convinced that the only way of bringing these truths before them with any certainty is to arrange them in logical sequence, and to illustrate them with suitable story material, thus forming a curriculum. This, of course, means that each

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Sunday there is a certain theme to be impressed through a new story or a group of old stories. There must, then, be a place reserved in the program for—what? Obviously, for telling the story. Let us write that down as a very necessary part of our program.

### **Before the Story**

Will telling the story mean only that? May it occasionally be necessary to explain some words or references in the story before telling it, so that it need not be interrupted? Can you think of a possible instance?

Suppose your story is about sheep, and you know that some of your children have never seen a sheep, either pictured or in real life. Will you begin your story, and, when the time comes for the sheep to enter, forsake the role of story-teller for that of instructor, and let your characters defer action while you explain what manner of animal a sheep is?

Ought large words to be made clear beforehand? Why not? Might anything else be done before the story, to make it more effective? Is it important that anticipation be aroused? Is it usually sufficient to announce that you will tell a story? Is the attention attracted by the words, "Once upon a time," or "Long, long ago"? Suppose you have a new story about a favorite character, such as David. Will it add any to the interest to say, "I will tell you another story about David"? Will it be likely to arouse interest in the children to hear that you are to tell them about the baby Moses when he was grown up, or about the little Lord Jesus after he had become a man?

The stories are told to illustrate certain truths, and

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they have failed of their purpose if these truths are not made very plain. Will a child be any more apt to see a truth in a story if, before hearing it, he has talked a little about that truth? For instance, if the story is told to illustrate obedience, the children's ideas on obedience may be drawn out before it is told. If the thought to be emphasized is children's helpfulness, a few questions may be asked about the ways in which the children help at home. Suggest possible approaches of this sort to some of the stories we use in Sunday school. Do you care to discuss the efficiency of the method?

Let us remember this—that each story should be judged as a unit, and its special treatment decided upon. We are far too liable to become stereotyped and mechanical and to overwork any method, no matter how good.

### After the Story

What can we do after the story that will intensify its message? For this is our great need. Will this be accomplished if the children retell it directly after listening to it? If they express the ideas received by means of some simple hand-work? If the teacher reiterates the truth, applying it to the child's life, urging him to obedience, helpfulness or what not?

It seems to me that the immediate and necessarily crude retelling of the story by the children, whether through lips or fingers, takes away from the impression we make, and we must never forget that our teaching is "not for imparting facts but for the culture of feeling." The process so aptly called "rubbing it in" we all know from experience defeats its aim.

What, then, remains—simply dismissal? Is there any

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beautiful expression of the story's truth that might be made at this time? How about the repetition of a Bible verse? a song? a prayer? May the children be allowed the opportunity to make natural responses? Will the examination of the story picture interfere with or stimulate this free expression?

Let us write down, as a very necessary part of our program, The Story Period, dividing it into a possible Approach, the Story Proper, and the brief space following, which may be termed After the Story.

How long do you think one can possibly hold the attention of a Beginners' class for a story? What is the shortest length of time necessary for telling a story? Calling eight minutes the longest time that one will attempt to hold the children's attention, and three minutes the shortest length of time required for a tale, allowing for a possible approach and a few moments for strengthening the feeling at the close, is not fifteen minutes a fair length for the story period? And we have agreed that this should come at the end of the hour.

### The Children's Part

Now have we, in these fifteen minutes, given all the time necessary to the story? Have we three-quarters of an hour left for the rest of the program—for prayer, song, Bible verse, and the other parts we consider essential? Will fifteen minutes a Sunday adequately "do" the story, so that it need never be mentioned again? Visit the nursery and see how it is there. Is one recital of "The Three Bears" enough? two? three? Do the children ever tell it or join in the telling? Do they refer to the story? act it out?

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Certainly we want the stories we tell in Sunday school to be as well-beloved as nursery tales. We have suggested that some stories occur more than once in the course, and that occasionally there be a choice among several old tales. We must also give the children an opportunity to talk about the stories, to tell them to us, to think of the characters as real friends, to refer to the incidents as well-known events.

We have already decided that we cannot wisely request them to retell the story directly after we have told it. We shall, then, have to reserve a place for this review somewhere before the story period of the following week. Let us consider exactly what we are going to do with the old story. Shall we look upon it in the light of a lesson to be perfectly recited? If we do, we shall be sadly disappointed, for at four and five the vocabulary is limited, and the power of continuous expression usually small, although now and then a child is able to tell an entire story alone. We can expect at best disjointed sentences. The whole plot of the story may be condensed by a child in a few words.

What we want is vivid interest in the old story. Is a good way of securing this interest to ask, "What was our last story about?" Does it make a happier beginning to say, "Whom was our last story about?" The names of Bible characters are often unusual and difficult for children to remember. Might a child have an excellent knowledge of the story and yet not be able to pronounce the hero's name? Tell me some ways of introducing the review story that will insure interest. Showing the picture will awaken memories of the story in nearly every child. Another very popular method is to begin the story exactly

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as you did at the first telling, and stop every now and then for the children to go on. They will take the sentences out of your mouth. Sometimes there will be a chorus of little voices. The interest will be even more intense than that at the first hearing.

Would you ever act out a story in Sunday school? Do you think the possibility of doing so depends largely upon the kind of story? Would you care to act out an episode in Christ's life? On the other hand, would such a story as "Ruth in the Barley Field" lend itself very readily to this method of reproduction?

Do you ever hear of your children spontaneously acting out their Sunday-school stories at home? The story of baby Moses was played in one home, the clothes-basket being pressed into service. A minister's small daughter was so impressed by the story of the good Samaritan that she insisted upon playing it at home again and again, the father nobly consenting to take the part of the donkey! A mother hastened to the nursery at the sound of cries, and found her little son pummeling his baby sister. "She is the lion that's getting my lamb; I'm David," he explained. When the mother suggested that the sister figure as the lamb and a chair represent the lion, the boy was perfectly content, his only wish being to make real his favorite story. These instances simply illustrate the natural tendency of children to dramatize a story that has taken hold of them.

The conclusion of the whole matter is this—that if the story is to effectively bring its message to the child, it must not only be told vividly, but approached wisely, followed up sympathetically, and reviewed in a way that will heighten the interest.

## THE STORY PERIOD

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Give your reasons for and against making a program, and indicate the characteristics of a program which will not hinder spontaneity.

2. Choose three stories used in the International Beginners' Course, and give what you consider poor methods of approach to these stories.

3. Give your ideas as to wise methods of approach to these same stories.

4. Write out ways of filling the few moments following these stories that you think tend to detract from the effect produced.

5. Suggest effective ways of filling this time.

6. Give general plans for the interesting review of stories, and mention those you believe most applicable to the three stories already considered.

## LESSON XII

### BUILDING THE PROGRAM—THE CIRCLE TALK

*Self-expression is at once the motive and the method of all culture.—Milton S. Littlefield*

#### What It Is

Did you ever witness, or better, participate in a public kindergarten "morning talk"? Of what does it consist? Give me your impression of this part of the kindergarten program. Do you think something similar fills a need in the Sunday-school hour? It certainly seems important that we set apart a period for the free interchange of thought, when the children may have an opportunity to express themselves spontaneously and informally.

However, in spite of the importance of the children's free self-expression, isn't there also an opportunity, indeed, a necessity for instruction on the part of the teacher? Surely the educational ideal is a happy combination of self-expression and instruction. This instruction means something entirely foreign to a laborious impartation of facts or a dry drill on words. It means assisting, building upon and interpreting the child's spontaneous self-expression. Froebel meant this when he made the revolutionary statement, noted in a previous lesson,—“Education and instruction should from the very first be passive, observant, protective, rather than prescribing, determin-



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ing, interfering." Madame Montessori, the modern Italian educator, has this original conception of a teacher—that she is not the dictator but the observer, not the leader but the follower. She must be trained to note sympathetically the children's spontaneous acts, not to interfere unless these are injurious to others, but to be always on the alert to suggest and assist in carrying out ideas.

This ideal, somewhat modified, should be maintained in the circle talk. Questions are to be answered, remarks commented upon and related to the theme under consideration, activities not forbidden but regulated, new knowledge made merely the outgrowth of old. So shall we be developing rather than forcing our children.

### Story and Song

Suppose we consider the component parts of the circle talk, and place them under the two headings Instruction and Self-Expression.<sup>1</sup>

Now that we have a good number of possibilities for our circle talk, we must consider whether our placing has been wise. The review of the last story is properly placed under Self-Expression, as the child's relation of it is obviously that. The only opportunity for instruction is when a wrong idea has been gained by the child, as in the case of a little girl for whom the ingredients of Elijah's cake were meal and kerosene, or the child who insisted that Moses was hidden by his mother "in a clothes-press."

As to songs, of course there must be instruction, if the

<sup>1</sup>These parts should be mentioned by the class and placed in the columns in which they decide they belong. Discussion may cause them to be placed in both columns or transferred from one to the other. The above discussion is of course merely suggestive.

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child is to be able to sing them at all. A song cannot be developed from his inner consciousness. It is something to be learned and so requires teaching. However, isn't the ultimate function of a song self-expression? And whether it can ever become self-expression depends largely upon the manner in which it is taught. Suppose we illustrate by three methods of teaching Stevenson's classic couplet—a verse ideally suited to little children, both in thought and expression.

“The world is so full of a number of things,  
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.”

The first method proceeds something as follows:

“Now, children, we are to learn a new song, and I want you to pay attention. You must learn to sing it well, so that when your fathers and mothers come to visit, I shall not be ashamed of you. Listen and say the words after me.

“‘The world is so full of a number of things.’

“The little boys may say it alone—the little girls—the five-year-old-children—the four-year-old-children—all together. I will say the second line very, very plainly. You may try it—again—again. Now both lines. You know the words pretty well, so I will teach you the tune.” After which the children are drilled on the music in like fashion.

This may be termed the drill method. The children are trained to perform. Would it be possible for a song learned in this way to become self-expression?

A second method, the explanatory, is largely a reaction from the first. In an attempt to avoid thoughtless drill the teacher starts out with the determination to leave no word meaningless, and thus the song is taught:

## THE CIRCLE TALK

"Dear children, do you know what the world is? It is the round ball upon which we live. The world is full of all sorts of things for us. Did you ever drink from a glass that had only a few drops of water in it? That glass was not full. When the water reaches up to the very brim, the glass is full. Now the world is full—like the full glass of water—of a number of things—not one or two or three things, but a number." Thus the teacher drones on, laboriously endeavoring to make clear the simple verse, trying to define happiness, as she teaches the second line, and to give a clear picture of a king. We might term this conscientious discursiveness.

In a third method the teacher escapes both Scylla and Charybdis by avoiding undue drill and wearisome explanation. This may be called the inspiring method, and is certainly the one that will lead to self-expression.

"Let's think of all the things in the world that make us happy," she begins; "bread and milk and apples and warm coats and nice houses and—" letting the children go on in detail, which is a child's delight. Then she says, quite naturally,—

"'The world is so full of a number of things,  
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.'"

"I'll sing about it, and while I sing, you may think of all those things you told me about that the world is full of to make you happy.

"I felt as happy as a king when I sang. Did I look so? Sing it with me, and I shall know from your faces if you are really and truly happy."

The simple words are easily caught, and the simple tune has perhaps been made familiar for a Sunday or two, but the main point is that the spirit of the song has been in-

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fused into the children, so that it becomes an expression of gladness, and connects itself naturally with their gifts, with joyous events in their lives, with the pictures and stories in Sunday school that tell of the loving care of the heavenly Father. It will hereafter be suggested at appropriate times by the children, not only in Sunday school but at home.

For instance, one child of three, who saw for the first time a picture of a child sitting in the midst of an array of toys said, "Let's sing the song that belongs to it."

"But there is no song. This is a new picture," insisted a dense grown-up.

"Oh, yes, there is,—'The world is so full.'"

This is merely illustrative of the spirit in which a song may be sympathetically taught. Less simple words need, of course, some repetition, and totally foreign expressions a slight explanation, but the method of instruction, together with the appropriate use, determines the possibility of a song's real function—worship and praise and the natural expression of thought and feeling.

### **Bible Verses**

Let us take up next the learning of Bible verses. They, too, must be taught, but there is a world-wide difference between their use as recitation and as expression of thought. Again, the inadequate teacher demands the perfect recital of last Sunday's Bible verse, and praise follows upon glibness, while the failure to have the words on the ends of unaccustomed tongues wins disapproval. "Didn't mother teach it to you? You are the only boy who cannot say his verse!" the teacher remarks, and the folders are given out with the stern injunction to learn the

## THE CIRCLE TALK

verse thereon, the words of which are distinctly and slowly read.

Suppose we watch our sympathetic teacher and see how she treats the Bible verses. She has finished the story of the cruel behavior of Joseph's brothers. "Let us love one another," she says softly. The following Sunday there is a little conversation about the children's family relationships. "Shall we say the little Bible verse that tells how to keep a home happy?" she asks. "Let us love one another." Then a finger family song is sung, and quite naturally the verse again repeated—"Let us love one another."

Or when the story is about God's care for birds and animals, the teacher weaves in most naturally the verse, "Your heavenly Father feedeth them." And what could be more satisfactory on the following Sunday than for a child to touch the picture of squirrels caressingly and say, "Your heavenly Father feedeth them."

Compare a recitation of the verse, "Be ye kind one to another," and a use of it in connection with pictures of kind people, or those who have failed in kindness. Does it call forth such a vivid sense of God's care to merely recite for approbation the words, "He careth for you," as for each child to say the verse, adding another child's name and thus making it personal?

Some teachers, whose vision is not greater than a perfect recitation, drill on prayer verses and let the children compete as to who can say them best, while instead they might in them find a means to worship. For it is very real worship when a child, after speaking of daytime joys and the night when God's stars keep watch, bows his head and says, "The day is thine, the night also is thine."

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It is neither asking nor giving thanks, but nevertheless an expression of gladness and wonder at God's power, when after recounting winter joys or summer beauties a child prays, rather than says, "Thou hast made summer and winter.'"

Can you add instances of Bible verses used in such natural ways? What is your conclusion in regard to their function?

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Explain what is meant by the "circle talk."
2. Give your reasons for considering it important.
3. How are both self-expression and instruction a necessary part of a child's education?
4. Give an instance of the formal teaching of a song.
5. Prepare to teach a song in a way that will induce self-expression.
6. Describe the sympathetic and unsympathetic use of Bible verses.

## LESSON XIII

### BUILDING THE PROGRAM—THE CIRCLE TALK

(continued)

*With language begins Expression and Representation of the inner Being of Man.—Friedrich Froebel*

#### The Ideal Atmosphere

We prate much of the advantage of the right atmosphere during the circle talk, and in my opinion try to capture this desirable condition in exactly the wrong way.

Have you ever seen a teacher endeavoring to force an atmosphere artificially? Was the effect wholesome? Isn't it on the same principle as setting out to influence others? He who most effectually casts the spell of his individuality over his fellowmen is he who is unconsciously noble, spontaneously helpful. So it is the teacher's spirit that creates the atmosphere—her forgetfulness of self in her interest in the children; her susceptibility to their feelings; her own longing for worship; her absorption in the theme of the day; her enthusiasm in the subjects discussed. Without decrying in the least such assistance as music and beautiful surroundings and the informal arrangement of the circle, after all, it is the soul of the teacher that induces the ideal atmosphere.

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### The Child's Worship

We have already spoken of two important elements of the circle talk—song and Bible verse, and decided that they should be placed under both the headings Instruction and Self-Expression. Let us take up next the subject of prayer—a very necessary part of the circle talk.

Supposing that we as teachers are in tune both with our heavenly Father and his little children, and keenly alive to the privilege—you note I say privilege rather than duty—of communicating with him, how is true prayer to be induced? Must it, to be sincere, be wholly spontaneous, the words the choice of the moment, the chance expression of an immediate thought?

Surely there is a wonderful reality in these little, spontaneous prayers, when we name over the things for which we are glad—the new suit, our food, or rather, apples, bread, cereal, ice-cream, and the specialized list which a little child must always give, the flowers we have brought to Sunday school, the sunshine coming through the window—and say or sing “Thank you.” Sometimes we do not go so far as to express gratitude but simply say, “We are glad.” Often the prayer is one asking for help, or, when our thoughts are turned to kindness, we stop to say, “Please help us always to be kind to our sisters and brothers.” If the theme is obedience, we ask to be made strong to mind, no matter if we don’t want to; if helpfulness, we tell the heavenly Father that we shall try never to forget to help care for the birds and our pets.

Such spontaneous prayers are the finest kind of self-expression, and the informality of the Beginners’ circle, together with the teacher’s spirit, induces the atmosphere that makes them not only possible but necessary.



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What influence do you believe such worship will have upon the child's prayers as he grows older? Will it be easy and natural for him to speak to God from the heart anywhere and at any time? Will this habit of communing with him so cling that, like Enoch, our children will all their lives "walk with God"?

And yet there are more formal prayers which, like songs, must be learned, which the unsympathetic teacher may reduce to mere forms, and which, on the other hand, may serve as a delightful and childlike medium of worship. We have spoken of Bible prayer-verses and there are also prayer-songs and prayer-poems. These require instruction, but of that sort which will lead to self-expression.

A three-year-old child, who was away from home with her parents for several weeks, said on her return, "Every morning I sang,

"Father, we thank thee for the night,  
And for the pleasant morning light."

"I'd lie in my crib and sing it all by myself."

Wasn't that charming self-expression? "Jesus, Tender Shepherd, Hear Me" becomes a beloved evening prayer, and both in Sunday school and at home children sympathetically taught such prayers will suggest their use.

There is still another phase of worship which can scarcely be tabulated, and yet which is perhaps the truest worship of a little child. It is his wonder. Carlyle has said, "Worship is transcendent wonder."

An Easter lily stood in the circle one Easter Sunday. On the blackboard was the drawing of a church bell, and on the wall a picture of a church spire in which hung a bell.

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"Find me an Easter bell," said the teacher, whose plan was to introduce the thought of the day by speaking of the Easter bells that call people to church.

A small boy, with never a glance at drawing or picture, stepped eagerly to the plant, and touched almost reverently one of the white lilies. "God's Easter bell," he said.

And then, in groups of two or three the children went up to the lily, caressing its fair petals, inhaling its fragrance, and—wondering. There was during those moments worship, though no audible prayer. For what could be truer worship than the raising of the children's hearts in loving wonder to the Creator of beauty!

When your children bring you the flower, the dainty sea-shell, the marvelous bird's-nest, the painted autumn leaf, do you thank them and say, "How pretty!" possibly murmuring something about God who made them, or do you stop a while and wonder? When from your window you see the leaves dance and the boughs wave, mysteriously, magically, do you talk glibly of the wind, or do you stop talking entirely for an instant, and just wonder? When your thoughts have been turned to the night-time, and the children have told tales of the starry heavens, do you make use as worship of that child wonder-verse,—

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are,  
Up above the world so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky!"

When your children, to those prayers that are spoken and sung, both spontaneous and formal, have added the worship of wonder, then have they truly communicated with their heavenly Father.

## THE CIRCLE TALK

### Expression through the Hand

Again, take the matter of hand-work—if such little children's crude drawing or coloring can be dignified by such a term. Has this any legitimate function in Sunday school if it is not self-expression? Are we teaching our children here to be artists or craftsmen of any sort? Is there the time for this? the need?

The reason a teacher who understands little children occasionally suggests a use of crayon and blackboard or paper is not alone to vary monotony and thus reawaken interest, but to afford fingers the opportunity of which lips often are incapable. For self-expression is such a necessary part of a child's development, and the vocabulary is so limited and words so difficult for shy lips to form that the problem is frequently solved by hand-work. The blue blur is the flower which makes the child glad, the straight mark the stick which David used to protect his sheep, the tiny dots the crumbs with which the child fed the birds, the yellow crosses God's stars that keep watch when a child sleeps, the green marks God's carpet for the earth, on which his beasts feed.

By no means put this part of the circle talk under the heading Instruction, or show approbation or disapproval of the little child's manner of expressing his thought, but lay your emphasis upon the thought expressed.

### The Use of Pictures

We may test the efficacy of our methods in a similar way by our use of pictures. They are often necessary as instruction, for giving a clear mental picture of sheep, of birds, of trees, and of story incidents. They should

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

also be made so interesting and so full of meaning that they may be a delightful aid to the little child's power of expressing himself.

"Find all the pictures of kind people," says the teacher, and the children show what impression of kindness they have received by touching the good shepherd, the good Samaritan, and possibly the mother in the Sistine Madonna.

"Touch pictures of creatures and things the heavenly Father takes care of," she suggests again, and the children pick out animal and bird and flower pictures, and even discover these things as details of Bible story pictures.

"I wonder who can find me a picture about the verse 'Let us love one another,'" she asks, and the pictures illustrating helpful love are chosen.

The crux of the whole matter is this—to develop not inform, to draw out not pour in, and thus give to the child his opportunity to grow naturally.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. What do you mean by "atmosphere" and how is it obtained?
2. Write out your ideal of a little child's worship.
3. Give some illustration of spontaneous prayer on the children's part and of a prayer so taught as to be real self-expression.
4. Illustrate how hand-work has a legitimate place in the Sunday school.
5. How may pictures be an aid to self-expression?
6. Discuss similarly any other element of the circle talk you may have in mind.

## LESSON XIV

### PRACTISE IN CONDUCTING THE CIRCLE TALK

*They found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions.—The Gospel according to Luke*

#### Its Possibilities

A teacher of Beginners once said, "It is the circle talk that I find difficult. When I get to the story, I feel so safe."

Why was this? Simply because during the story-telling the teacher has the floor and can discourage interruptions. In the circle talk, on the other hand, the children's chance remarks, their comments and questions are not looked upon at all in the light of interruptions. Indeed, they are a definite part of the program, and the failure of a teacher to induce such confidences from her class is as great as to tell the story poorly, or to conduct a session destitute of worship.

To meet such remarks wisely and effectively is not easy. One may definitely prepare the story, but, except in its general trend, the circle talk must ever be an unknown quantity. What staggering questions will our children ask? What frank bits of news from their world, the home, will they divulge? What unexpected comments will they make upon the story or our statements? What

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malapropos remarks may they venture? The circle talk is as much more difficult than the story for most teachers as is the open debate than the studied speech.

Is this discouraging? Not so, except to very faint hearts, but rather stimulating. The most highly civilized nations of the world have made conversation a fine art, and become skilled in repartee. What finer art can a teacher of little children cultivate than the satisfying one of meeting their confidences with loving sympathy, their questions with thoughtful answers, their naive comments with wise tact, and their bits of news with respectful attention? Such a teacher will find abundant reward in the wider opening of that door of communication between her and the children, which spells friendship, and a still finer satisfaction in the disclosures such free expression reveals of the real feelings and opinions she has been able to induce through her teaching.

A question occurs right here. Should these communications simply be accepted as confidences, to establish an intimacy between teacher and children, and as indications of the efficacy of the teaching they have received, or can they be further utilized?

In one of our first lessons we quoted Dr. George Dawson as saying, "Everything in a child's surroundings should be interpreted religiously." Here, then, is our great opportunity to accomplish this. The interests and incidents of the children's lives, brought to us informally, may often be related to the lesson of the day. They may frequently be illustrated by a song or a Bible verse. They may suggest an explanatory blackboard drawing. They may lead to prayer. In other words, they may be "interpreted religiously."

## CONDUCTING THE CIRCLE TALK

### The Secret of Success

Does this freedom on the children's part suggest to your mind pandemonium, an unregulated buzz of conversation? Surely not that. It is simple to request one child to wait for another to say what he wishes. Does it suggest desultory talk on any subject whatever, entirely without sequence or connection? From this one might gain intimacy but hardly education. Without doubt there will be many an irrelevant remark, inappropriate question and recital of incidents impossible to relate to the subject at hand. It lies with the teacher to perceive both when this is so and when a connection is possible. It lies with her to discern between the confidence that may be interpreted by a song or a word, and that which should be merely received sympathetically; between the remark which should be passed over and that which will intensify the thought of the day, or the child's religious feeling; between the question that demands a thoughtful answer and that which is not worthy serious attention.

The teacher who is in close sympathy with her children will gain their confidences, and if she is also filled with the lesson theme, she will be quick to catch any connection between it and their chance remarks. Then, too, she will be adept in guiding the conversation into a channel that will illustrate this theme.

Nor will she limit her "interpretations" entirely to the present theme, for surely a child may be thankful as well as inspired to generosity at Christmas, and a reference to clothes or food should deepen his sense of the heavenly Father's care, in the spring as well as when that subject was particularly impressed. Remarks that illustrate past as well as present themes are valuable, always

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

remembering that the chief object is to make clear the theme of the day.

### Practise Work

Nor must a teacher rely too much upon her sympathy and quick-wittedness at the moment. She may gain by practise in conducting the circle talk as in story-telling.

Suppose we play a kind of game. We will write one of the themes where all can see it. A member of the class may make a natural child's remark, and select another member to meet the remark as a teacher should—pay little attention to it, briefly comment upon it, or relate it to the theme. Then will follow an open discussion as to the wisdom of the method used and possible suggestions for one that is better. Whoever makes such a suggestion will next give a typical child's remark or ask a question or offer a confidence, and this will be responded to in like fashion. Any so-called child's remark that is not actually childlike will be ruled out.<sup>1</sup>

Take first the theme, *The Heavenly Father's Care*. Suppose a child says, "See my new suit!" Isn't this a remark to be hushed up, lest he become unduly fond of clothes? Can it have any possible connection with the theme? Surely it can—a very real one. The new suit may be "interpreted religiously." Instead of, "Hush, hush, my dear, do not talk about your clothes!" the understanding teacher will say something like this—"I am so glad you have such a warm, pretty, new suit. Who

<sup>1</sup>This method has been used successfully, and given inexperienced teachers a clearer idea of informal, inductive teaching than would be possible in any other way, except by visiting a Beginners' class session. A suggestive discussion follows.



## CONDUCTING THE CIRCLE TALK

gave it to you? Did you know that your father could not have given you your suit, except for an animal that wore it first? Yes, a woolly sheep. And do you know who made the coat for the woolly sheep and for you? Yes, the heavenly Father. 'He careth for you.'” And most natural after this will be the suggestion by a child of the song, “He Cares for Me.” Thus the theme of the day will be introduced or continued through a little child’s casual remark, and he will be helped to see the loving care behind his clothes.

Suppose, instead, a child starts to relate in all its details some catastrophe he has witnessed on his way to Sunday school—such as a dog run over by a car. Isn’t this one of the confidences to be nipped in the bud, that he may not impose his feeling of horror upon the entire group? If you feel that the confidence will be somewhat assuaged by sharing it, as is often the case with children, let him tell you after Sunday school, or an assistant may take him aside to listen to the tale and help him to forget it.

Suppose, still again, a child comes across the circle to say eagerly, “My grandma has come to see me.” Shall you attempt to relate such a bit of home news to the theme? Wouldn’t such an attempt be rather far-fetched? It seems to me the natural response will be, “How lovely! A visit from a grandma is one of the nicest things that can happen.” It will perhaps be spontaneous to include in a prayer you make later about being glad for various things the children have mentioned “and for visits from grandmothers and people we love.”

Take now the theme Children Helping. Children respond well to your questions as to how they help at home, but in the midst of recitals of dishes wiped, errands

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done and chairs dusted, a young child may look at you fixedly and remark, "You've got on a new hat." Can this possibly be connected with the subject? Will you, then, treat the small interrupter like a culprit? Will you not rather say, "Yes, and I like to have new things, don't you?" and then continue with your talk. Suppose, instead, a child says, equally irrelevantly, "My mother won't let me eat candy." Isn't this an opportunity to show that obedience is a very good way of helping? And then, perhaps, say you know a song about the kind of helpful child that minds and dusts and goes on errands with a happy face, and sing,—

"Happy as a robin,  
Gentle as a dove,—  
That's the sort of little child  
Every one will love."

The charm of the circle talk comes from weaving together remark, song, story review, Bible verse, prayer and question into a connected whole, one thing explaining and complementing another, so that the theme never becomes tedious, being impressed in such a variety of ways, and the children's thoughts are regarded and interpreted.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Explain in what lies the difficulty of the circle talk.
2. Give your idea of its charm and possibility.
3. What attitude and spirit on the teacher's part will lead to success?
4. Mention two natural remarks of children, one of which may be related to the theme, Love Shown by Kindness, the other having no relation, and describe your manner of meeting them.
5. Do a similar thing in connection with the theme, Friendly Helpers.
6. Outline a suggestive circle talk on any theme you may choose.

## LESSON XV

### BUILDING THE PROGRAM—THE REMAINING PARTS

*"Genius is the capacity for taking pains"*

#### The Greeting and Opening Music

We have spoken of the two very important parts of the program, the story period and the circle talk. If we allow twenty minutes for the circle talk and fifteen minutes for the story period, we have twenty-five minutes left. How shall we fill this time most profitably? Tell me rapidly things you have noticed in the program and we will consider which are essential and which non-essential.<sup>1</sup>

First of all, what is natural at the very beginning of the session? Is it enough for the teacher to greet the children as they enter the room? Shouldn't they greet each other as well? Does this do away with any formality? What kind of an atmosphere does it induce? Does it accomplish anything toward allaying the lonely feeling of the shy children present for the first time? Would you single out such a child to be greeted? Why not? Should the greeting song be very simple, one that can be picked

<sup>1</sup>The unimportant as well as the important parts should be considered, the class deciding which are superfluous and which necessary. Always remember that you are the class leader, not its dictator. The above discussion is, of course, merely typical.

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

up readily without formal teaching? What is the simplest one you know?

Do you ever ask two or three children to go about the circle shaking hands, and looking into each other's eyes, while the greeting song is sung? Do you think that every absent child should be mentioned each Sunday? that those who were absent the Sunday before should be sung to, individually or collectively?

Can we afford to spend a long time in this greeting? Have you ever seen it dragged out to such length that it lost its effectiveness? Let it be hearty and spontaneous and it need not take many minutes. If it is perfunctory with us, it will be with our children. Unless we as teachers infuse into the simple song, so often repeated, an enthusiastic warm-heartedness, it will degenerate into a monotonous, stereotyped thing. The greeting is actually a test of our real fondness for the children and gladness to see them. Might it occasionally be seasonal, as at the New Year, Christmas and Easter?

But is a circle of active little children usually in a condition for a regulated greeting? What are these children apt to be doing before the beginning of the session? Even if they are in their chairs, are they sitting motionless? Will it need considerable "calling to order," if we take that method of notifying them that Sunday school has begun? Is there a better method of doing this? And anyway is your sole object calling to order? At this very beginning an atmosphere may be induced and the keynote for the hour struck. How? Yes, very effectively and satisfactorily by opening music, usually termed "quiet music." What will this do as regards discipline? the children's feelings?

## THE REMAINING PARTS

What character of music should be used? May it accomplish more than merely producing a good atmosphere and orderly behavior? When a new tune is played, it is in this way made familiar. Should such music always be quiet? Think of a sultry, lifeless day, and a circle of tired, dull children. What kind of opening music would you use then?

Let us set aside the first five minutes for the opening music and greeting.

### Birthday and Cradle Roll Services

There is a certain very important event in a child's life that we must not lose sight of in Sunday school. Next to Christmas, to what day do most children look forward? A birthday is a red-letter day in a child's year, for it is usually celebrated at home in some fashion, and it marks an advance toward the delectable state of being grown-up. The feeling that has prompted its observance in the Sunday school is an excellent feeling, though its observance has frequently been ill-advised. Describe to me birthday celebrations you have observed and criticize them.

Is it necessary or desirable that we pattern our Sunday-school birthday recognition after home birthday celebrations? Why not leave the birthday cake for the home instead of supplying a dubious imitation in wood, on which dust collects and, in summer, candles droop piteously? As pleasing to the birthday child and far more appropriate is a special chair in which he sits. It may be a chair different from the others or one decorated with a bow of bright ribbon, and the honor of occupying it has the added advantage of taking none of our precious moments. How

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

much time can we afford to spend in a birthday recognition? Is there need of a special birthday song? prayer? Let us never forget that simplicity and brevity, where there is genuine feeling, are more effective than long, elaborate exercises.

Should the Cradle Roll have any connection with the Beginners' department, and should it be noticed in the program? Have we the time or the need for a lengthy service of admission to the Cradle Roll? Need the Cradle Roll be mentioned each Sunday? Isn't it possible on a Sunday when a number of birthdays need to be recognized to postpone admitting a Cradle Roll baby till the following Sunday?

### Opening Prayer and Offering

Should there be prayer early in the hour—a recognition of God's presence? It seems natural, indeed, necessary for a truly spiritual teacher to speak to the heavenly Father, as she and the children have spoken to each other. This prayer may occupy a special place in the program and yet be sincere, if it is a real prayer on the teacher's part and suggested sympathetically to the children. After a time they will grow so accustomed to it that they will often suggest speaking to the heavenly Father.

Do most children bring an offering? For what is it desirable that the money should go—for the purchase of supplies or for some charitable object? If the latter, should the children know anything about the object, that is, should they be given a detailed account of a mission field? Is there time? the necessity? Is it sufficient simply to say that the money is for some of God's poor people? Is there any special time of year when the offering should

## THE REMAINING PARTS

be made a very prominent part of the program? How about Christmas? Name various methods of taking up the offering, and let us decide upon the most practical. Do you advocate a lengthy offering service? Isn't five minutes ample for either cradle roll or birthday service, opening prayer and offering?

### The Order of the Program

After this will naturally come the circle talk, lasting for about twenty minutes. Or will the story come best before the circle talk? It seems natural, doesn't it, to have the review of the last story and the conversation in regard to its truth before the new story? Isn't it best to listen to the children's confidences early, rather than late in the hour? Sometimes they cannot wait even till the circle talk to tell the news they are full of. And then, the program should be so planned as to work up to a climax—that climax the story, with its response of feeling.

Between the circle talk and the story period what is needed, that the children may attend well to the story? Surely three or five minutes for moving about and resting cramped bodies.

After the story period there should be an orderly dismissal. This will be best effected by putting on the wraps before the good-bye song is sung. If, however, there are mothers to attend to the wraps, or if the room opens directly upon the street, the good-bye song may be sung and the folders distributed before the slight disorder of getting the children ready for outdoors.

The following, then, is the program as we have out-

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

lined it, the program that is to make possible, and not destroy freedom.

Quiet Music and Greeting .....	5 minutes
Birthday or Cradle Roll Service .....	} 5 minutes
Opening Prayer .....	
Offering Service .....	
Circle Talk .....	20 minutes
Rest Period .....	5 minutes
Story Period .....	15 minutes
Putting on Wraps .....	} 10 minutes
Good-bye Song .....	
Distribution of Folders .....	
	—
	60 minutes

Dismissal

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Give your ideal for the greeting.
2. Bring examples of effective opening music and tell where found.
3. Write out effective plans for birthday and Cradle Roll recognition.
4. Tell your opinion as to the object of offerings and an appropriate service.
5. Outline a program, with reasons for the order.
6. Come prepared to carry out an entire program, choosing your lesson.



## LESSON XVI

### THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC

*All the music that we hear,  
Listening with the outward ear,  
Would be powerless to win us,  
If there lived not deep within us  
Its innate idea.*

—Friedrich Froebel

#### Its Double Function

Did you ever hear of a Beginners' session without music? Why is music used so universally? It has two functions—its effect upon the children and its use as self-expression.

What effect has martial music upon soldiers? a lullaby upon a baby? Mention other instances of music's wonderful influence. Give illustrations of music that has made a special appeal to your children. There is the music at the beginning of the program, which has power to create an atmosphere for the hour—the reverent hymn that induces worship, or the cheery tune that dispels dullness and inertia. What a challenge is the brisk march to leave the room in good order! What an awakening of the spirit of hearty greeting the well-known notes of the welcome song! Have you utilized music in this way all that is possible?

Then there are the songs which afford a means of self-

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

expression. If the tunes of such songs are adapted to the words, and if the words are simple and childlike, and have been so taught as to be full of meaning, the playing of the tune will seem to say to the children, "Come and sing me! Here's something you want to sing!"

So, in our use of music, let us think of its double province, and not limit ourselves to a single function.

### **Its Quality**

There is something else to be thought of beside the type of music we use, and that is its quality. Quiet music may be a trifling air played softly or it may be a succession of delicate, harmonious chords. A march may be rag-time, or one equally easy to march by, and yet high grade. Music must be of a worshipful character in order to inspire to prayer. Of all places Sunday school ought to be one in which children's ears grow accustomed to the finest music, and the Beginners' department should set the standard.

As to songs, what is a necessary qualification, if little children are to sing them at all? In your opinion does simplicity mean inferiority? They must not only be easy to learn but so attractive that the children will wish to learn them. Rhythm is essential and that does not in the least mean two-step or cheap waltz time. Melodies that will sing themselves in the child's head and insist on being hummed are what we want, and are in no way inconsistent with high-grade music. Many folk-song melodies and airs from classics are childlike, simple and alluring.

As to the words, let the same rule hold. Shall we teach words so beyond the comprehension of the children

## THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC

that they cannot be used as the expression of their thoughts? Shall we, on the other hand, fill their minds with trivial words or trash, their one recommendation being their simplicity? Mention examples of both kinds. Which is preferable? Can you repeat a song that is both simple in thought and word and also good literature? How about some of Robert Louis Stevenson's poems? Christina Rossetti's?

### Selection of Songs

We must remember that little children cannot learn many songs, and therefore plan very carefully our year's program, so that the songs cover and yet do not unnecessarily duplicate the truths taught. One Christmas song well-known, and therefore well-beloved, is far better than several that can be but half-learned. If we want a song that expresses the love of the Lord Jesus, "Jesus Loves Me" is both time-honored, appealing to children, and so simple that the smallest child can pick up at least the refrain. It is appropriate and inspiring with all the stories of Jesus. The Bible verses that are used with the lessons, when set to music, may make a delightful combination of valuable words and simple tunes. Not more than one seasonal song is advisable, and a single verse of a song is usually enough. Occasionally, in a long song, such as "Can a Little Child Like Me," the teacher may sing the verse and the children join in the refrain—in this case a prayer. Frequently a song may be sung to the children by the teacher. This is a pleasant change from continuous talking, and no teacher need be a professional singer in order to be quite acceptable to her small audience. This gives an opportunity for a good many more songs

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to be enjoyed than can possibly be learned by the children. Often one tune, such as that of "Good Morning to You," may be used with a slight change of words for Christmas, New Year and birthday greetings, to save learning a new tune.

In the teachers' text-books of some Beginners' courses, notably the International, a program of songs is given, the words of many of them being printed on the child's folder, to facilitate their use at home. A caution is needed right here against following any such schedule absolutely, for adaptations must always be made to one's own particular children. Any such program naturally takes into consideration the fact that, except in departments newly formed, a part of the children will remember more or less well the songs of the previous year.

In our selection of songs, then, let us test each one thus: What appeal does it make to little children? Will the words awaken thought or serve as self-expression? Have they literary merit as well as the quality of simplicity? Is the music high-class and yet attractive and singable? Is this a necessary song or does it duplicate a thought? Is one verse sufficient? How can I secure the use of this song at home as well as in Sunday school? With what other lessons besides this particular one will it be appropriate? If it is hardly worth the effort of being learned, will the refrain be sufficient? or shall I sing it all to the children?

### The Use of Songs

Having spoken now of the function of music and rules governing the selection of songs, and in our lesson on the circle talk considering quite at length the sympathetic

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teaching of songs, that they may be sung understandingly, suppose we spend the remainder of this class in thinking about the use of songs. For it is frequently the case in all our teaching that we fail signally to make the most of what we have taught. We study to tell our stories well and have them retold, but then consider our task at an end. We teach Bible verses so that they are recited intelligently, when we drop them as things learned and therefore finished with. When a song is learned and sung at the appropriate time, we are too apt to leave it. Most of us have not caught the vision of the use we can make of old stories, familiar Bible verses and beloved songs, thus deepening their impression a hundred fold. The more little children use the few songs they know, the better they love them and the more spirit they put into them. This does not mean that spring songs should be sung when snow is flying, and the New Year welcome when the year is nearing an end, but that songs not strictly seasonal will bear frequent use and gain instead of lose through repetition.

### **A Means of Emphasizing the Thought**

Sometimes it is well to sing just for the pure love of singing—song after song that the children choose. Sometimes we suggest the song that fits the thought, or impresses our teaching. And most often the song forms a part of the continuous sequence of thought our session claims to have—chosen now by a child, now by the teacher, illustrating a picture, introducing a story, making clear a Bible verse—so fitting into thought and feeling as to assist in making the program a unit. Do we feel the desire to worship? We have prayers that are sung as

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well as spoken. Are our hearts filled with love of Jesus, the children's friend? What more appropriate expression of our feelings than the well-beloved "Jesus Loves Me"! Does the outdoor world make a strong appeal? There are the songs of the season. Is Christmas or Thanksgiving absorbing our thoughts? It is time for a festival song. Have we received an impulse toward kindness or helpfulness or loving obedience? This impulse is wonderfully strengthened by a song bringing out the same idea.

The way songs are chosen adds much to the children's interest in them. Tell methods you have used successfully. The element of mystery and surprise is always fascinating. "We will shut our eyes and when we open them Ruth will be standing by the picture that makes her think of a song," we say. "We will play be asleep, while John whispers a song to the pianist, and we will not wake up till we know from the tune what song it is." "Harry will draw something on the board that will help us to guess the song he wants." Such methods add variety and interest.

### **A Means of Self-Expression**

Again, our use of songs is largely as self-expression and never as an accomplishment. There will always be the child who is a line behind, the child who sings in a monotone, the child who will not sing at all. A finished performance is not possible with such little children, especially as we have them but once a week, but life, interest, appreciation and self-expression are possible.

You notice I have used the pronoun "we" instead of "they." This is done advisedly, for unless we share with

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our children their enthusiasm, their feeling and their love of singing, we are not truly sympathetic. Our own power of entering into the simplest and oftenest repeated song with abandon, real and not assumed, shows us true child lovers, sympathetic guides, feeling what the children feel and sharing their spiritual growth.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. What is your idea of the function of music?
2. Illustrate your ideal of songs, both music and words.
3. Report the best sources you know for this type of song.
4. Make out a possible schedule of songs to be used for a quarter with the Beginners' course you are teaching, and bring to the class for criticism.
5. Discuss possibilities for the sympathetic use of songs.
6. Come prepared to conduct a circle talk, bringing in the songs effectively.

## LESSON XVII

### SEEING AND TOUCHING

*Round-eyed, quick to hear and eager to touch, he is busy absorbing the world about him.—Luther A. Weigle*

#### Utilizing More than One Sense

It is perhaps hardly necessary, in these days when sense training is becoming such an important part of a child's education, to speak of the advantage of appealing to more than one sense in our teaching. However, do not most of us confine ourselves too closely to a single sense, and that is—? By story, conversation and music we appeal to the sense of sound, largely to the neglect of sight and touch. And the response we look for must also be directed to our sense of hearing—our children must speak or sing.

Now, it is a fact that ear-drums become somewhat lax in sending messages to the brain if they receive too many, so why not give eye and hand a chance? For, in the beginning of the child's development, eyes and inquisitive fingers did even more for his education than ears, and we shall do him a hurt by neglecting to continue utilizing them.

#### Number, Size and Color of Pictures

Possibly, next to songs, pictures are most generally used in Beginners' departments. In this way the impor



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tance of an appeal to the eye has been recognized, but often, alas, indiscriminately. Some teachers seem to act on the principle that if a thing is good, more of it is better. For instance, if one picture is good, fifty-two a year are better, and as many more as possible better still. If a small picture is good, a large one is better, and a very large one best of all. If color attracts children, all pictures should be colored, and the brighter the colors the more attractive the pictures.

Let us stop to consider this matter. Do you think there can be such a thing as too many pictures? Isn't this our present-day danger—giving our children a superfluity of everything? What is the effect upon them? Isn't it far better for one picture to become familiar and well-beloved than for a great number to be merely glanced at? If two pictures illustrate the same thought, wouldn't it be well to choose between them instead of presenting both? Of course, where one uses pictures to bring to the children's minds several varieties of the same thing—such as animals, flowers or vegetables—the matter is somewhat different.

As to the size of the pictures, is there any possibility of their being too large? Can children be as intimate with a very large picture as with one comparatively small? Will such pictures tend to take away the homelike atmosphere of the room? On the other hand, are pictures so small that they cannot be seen a yard off of very much use in a Beginners' circle?

In regard to color, do you prefer all the pictures colored, or do you see any advantage in a variety—some in black and white or brown tints and some colored? Might those that are colored be more distinctive for

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being comparatively rare? Do you see any argument in having pictures portraying figures and action uncolored, while nature pictures of flowers, birds and trees are colored? Does a horse need to be colored to attract a child's attention? a kitten? a squirrel? How about a flower? a bird? a vegetable?

A teacher may argue that, because children notice and like highly-colored newspaper supplements and other pictures of crude coloring, therefore only such will appeal to them. What is your opinion? We owe their esthetic sense something, and it is as much a cheapening of religion to associate it with crude pictures as with inferior music.

### Form, Kind and Use of Pictures

Not alone the size but the form of the pictures is important, if they are to accomplish all that is possible. The chief point to remember in regard to their form is that they be of such shape the children can easily handle them, and that not only the picture of the day but those for a few preceding Sundays be in sight and often referred to. What form lends itself most readily to this necessity?

The kind of story pictures to be chosen are, naturally, those that depict events most likely to interest children. Usually a picture showing action is most desirable. Let us examine critically pictures of different Beginners' courses and see if they meet this test. Also let us see how many emphasize the truth taught. Is it well to have some of the pictures of recognized artistic value? Why?

The use of pictures as a means of self-expression we mentioned in our lesson on the circle talk. What other

## SEEING AND TOUCHING

uses have they in connection with the story of the day? with preceding stories? How can they be used in interpreting Bible verses? songs? as a test of the children's grasp of the truths taught? in awakening thought? as an incentive to purposeful physical activity? Can they be used in any other way?

### A Neglected Sense

Let us turn our attention to another sense—one which has received too little attention at our hands, and yet one every child makes use of instinctively—the sense of touch. We speak laughingly of the propensity of children to “see through their fingers,” and yet constantly baffle the use of this sense by the command, “Don’t touch.” “Being good” in a child means to the average adult eyes and ears on the alert, but a tempered tongue and folded hands, unless, indeed, they are engaged in performing a legitimate task—legitimate being interpreted helpful to grown-ups or, in their eyes, educational.

So in the Sunday school we hang pictures well up out of reach, show objects but do not encourage handling them, and thus deliberately abandon that avenue of knowledge—touch. Little fingers eager to stroke and point out and small hands formed for grasping and feeling are forbidden their part in the wonderful task of gaining ideas.

Shall we not reform and allow fingers in our scheme of education—not only as a means of so-called “hand-work,” but to touch and handle objects and so learn about them and love them? Let us try to remember the days when the floor was so very much nearer than the ceiling, and in an ordinary room the legs of the furniture were

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better known to us than the backs or tops, when the mantelpiece was a distant part of the world and even most windows high peep-holes, through which we could only look a-tiptoe. With such remembrances, in our Beginners' room we shall drop our pictures from a place midway between ceiling and floor to a level with little children's eyes and finger tips. We shall have our blackboards low enough for short people to use easily, and any objects will be placed on a low table in the circle.

Then the pictures may be touched and the people and animals and flowers in them indicated. The shy child, who will not tell any of the story, will delightedly point out in last Sunday's picture the Wise Men, the camels and the star, the shepherd boy holding his rescued lamb, or whatever the story characters may be. Some tiny child may even kiss a pictured story hero or animal, thus showing his affectionate interest.

The necessity for handling the objects used in the Beginners' circle is easily seen, these almost invariably being objects of nature. The bit of lamb's wool or the cotton-boll feels so much softer than it looks. Why not pass it around so that every child may touch it? It seems much more wonderful that the squirrels can crack nuts and extract seeds from cones, when one has felt just how hard and stiff they are. The sea-shell is better known for being handled, the pussy-willow better loved for being stroked, and who that has seen a child sink his nose deep into the sweetness of a flower and gently finger its satin petals can bear to say, "Yes, pretty flower, but *don't touch*"?

## SEEING AND TOUCHING

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. How is it possible to overwork one of the senses to the neglect of the others?
2. Bring to the next class pictures illustrating good and bad points in size and color, form and kind.
3. Come prepared to illustrate the use of pictures in any way you may choose.
4. What sense are we apt to neglect?
5. Explain how a rearrangement of many a Beginners' room is necessary if the senses of sight and touch are to be utilized.
6. Give concrete examples of the use of the sense of touch.

## LESSON XVIII

### LEARNING THROUGH DOING

*The spiritual validity of hand-work is entirely a question of method.—Milton S. Littlefield*

#### Proper Perspective

The idea of hand-work has so caught the interest of many Sunday-school teachers that they feel a session is a failure without it. The teachers of Beginners realize that little children's abilities in this line are limited, but they are not willing to appear so behind the times as to confess having no hand-work, and so there is much clamor for cards to color, outlined figures to sew, material for modeling, and the like. Money is carefully husbanded that kindergarten tables may be purchased, specimens of hand-work are exhibited, books of hand-work bound up, and hand-work bids fair, in the minds of some teachers, to be the criterion by which Sunday-school effectiveness is tested.

Probably the great fault with us all is lack of proper perspective. It is so easy to say, "Here is a good thing. Let us bring it into the foreground"; and shove back to the dim distance others that should be prominent. Suppose a thing is good—how good is it? Suppose a thing is necessary—how necessary? Suppose a thing is worthy a place in our program—how large a place?

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Every now and then we get lost in a mass of detail and need to restate our aim in teaching and, with careful consideration of our limits of time and space, relentlessly play the gardener, and pull out the growths that choke and hinder the development of the finest plants of our little garden.

### Kinds of Hand-work

Now, first of all, tell me what hand-work is for. Its proper function must be decided.<sup>1</sup>

We hear much about an impression being expressed. Is this what hand-work means? If it does not accomplish this, then should it not be called "busy work"? Make a list of all the kinds of hand-work you have seen, and let us decide which must necessarily be mere busy work and which may be self-expression.<sup>2</sup>

Can coloring cards be the expression of a thought? Is this, then, valueless? Supposing the value to lie merely in the increased familiarity with the picture colored, should such work be frequent? Is there time for clay modeling? Can it be done with neatness? I have heard several teachers say, "I approve of hand-work, but I draw the line at sewing." Is this your feeling? If so, is it because there is something about using a needle that is intrinsically more closely related to Sabbath breaking than using a crayon? or is it because of the limitations in sewing? Explain to me how paper-cutting or paper-tearing may be used. Is the result worth while? Can

<sup>1</sup>The discussion will be based upon the answers given. If original ideas are not forthcoming, draw them out as suggested.

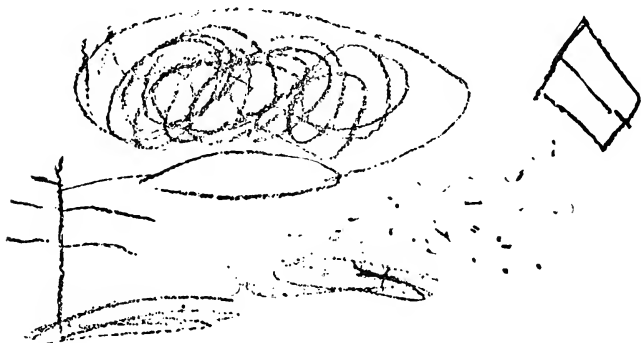
<sup>2</sup>Here, again, the discussion depends upon the kinds of hand-work named.

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pasting possibly be self-expression? Is it ever advisable often?

### Drawing

Is drawing practicable? Does it require special equipment? Some teachers regard tables as a disadvantage, arguing that in limited time it is better to make use of the chair seats. What is your opinion? Suppose we discuss



Drawing in application of a story on kindness to animals. Above is a dish of meat for a dog; at the right a window from which crumbs are thrown for winter birds; and at the left a tree on which the birds light.

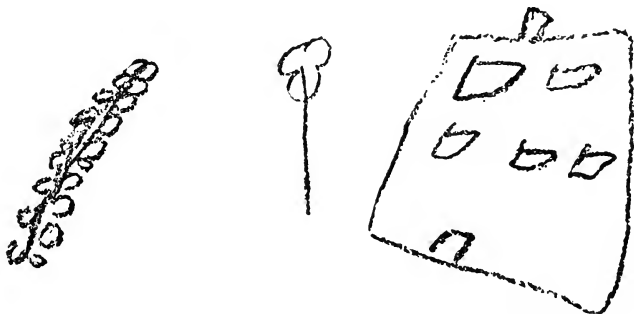
the little child's capacity for expressing his thoughts through this medium. Will the results be valuable as artistic efforts? Will they be of permanent value—worthy of preservation? In what will their value consist? Let us illustrate this by making typical children's drawings. Show on the blackboard how you have seen a child draw a tree, a horse, a cup, a flower, a bird's-nest.



## LEARNING THROUGH DOING

Can you reproduce a child's illustration of any Bible story?

These productions are certainly not artistic, often hardly recognizable, certainly not to be preserved as models for the children's future work, so that these early conceptions shall become permanent. And yet, despite their crudity and inadequacy, they are valuable as expressions of ideas. We usually are very lenient with a child's early imperfect use of language, and do not criticize him for retelling a story in unrelated words and incorrect sentences, with original pronunciations and curious paraphrases. When we regard early drawings similarly as forms of expression rather than works of art, we shall understand that they may have educational if not esthetic value.

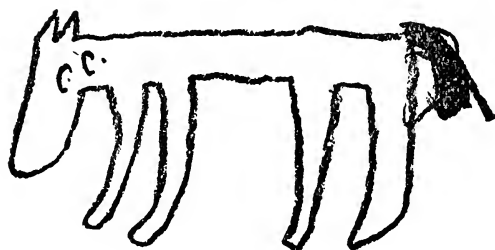
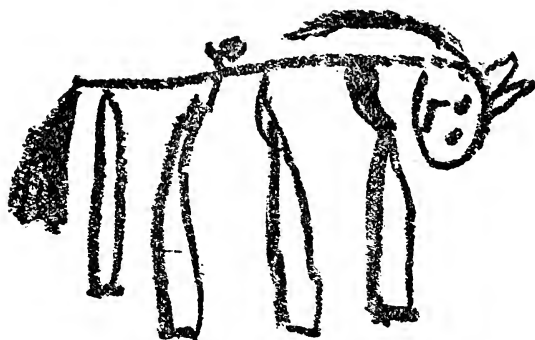


Drawing of things a child is thankful for—pussy willow, a violet, his house.

### Study of Children's Drawings

In Professor Sully's fascinating study of children's drawings, in "Children's Ways," he finds value even in a young

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Drawings to review a story of God's gifts to the horse, the points being a warm coat, strong legs, a tail for brushing off

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flies, keen scent and sharp hearing. The upper drawing is the work of a child four years old, who hangs legs, tail and head on a line, indicating the body, and makes a full human face. The middle drawing is by a child of five, who gets the idea of profile, except that he puts in two eyes. The lowest drawing is done by a child of six, who draws the horse more as one sees it, even suggesting the hoofs.

child's first pencil scrawls, because, though having made them aimlessly, the child either sees in them something remotely resembling in form his father or the kitty or a pig, or by the alchemy of imagination converts the lines into whatever his fancy may dictate, just as a stick becomes his doll or pebbles his flock of sheep. Professor Sully has also found children using original symbols to represent certain objects utterly unlike them in form, always making use of these symbols when pretending to draw the objects—thus beginning the formation of an original language, for are not words but symbols?

Professor Sully again says, speaking of drawings that first make an attempt to reproduce in the slightest degree the object, "It seems pretty evident that most children when they begin to draw are not thinking of setting down a likeness of what they see when they look at an object. In the first simple stage we have little more than a jotting down of a number of linear notes, a kind of rude and fragmentary description in lines rather than in words. Here a child aims at bringing into his scheme what seems to him to have most interest and importance, such as the features of the face, the two legs, and so forth. In the later and more ambitious attempt to draw a man in profile the old impulse to set down what seems important continues to show itself. Although the little draughtsman has decided to give to the nose, to the ear, and pos-

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sibly to the manly beard and the equally manly pipe, the advantage of a side view, he goes on exhibiting those sovereign members, the two round eyes, and the mouth with its flash of serried teeth, in their full front view glory. It is enough for him to know that the lord of creation has these members, and he does not trouble about so small a matter as our capability of seeing them all at at the same moment."

Looking at children's drawings from this point of view—as simply a small attempt at description with fingers rather than lips—gives meaning to their rude sketches, in that they indicate the points that particularly impress them, just as early descriptions of objects are significant. As the clock is, not something that tells time, not an article of wood and brass and glass, but a "tick-tick," and a knife is, not a small object of certain dimensions and materials, but "something to cut with," so a star is a yellow dot or cross; a man a round head, with or without features, possibly supported on two legs, but often bodiless; a chicken a little round object.

For a child belongs to the impressionistic school of art, and it is simply his impression he tries to give us, drawing, as Professor Augsburg tells us, not "directly from the object, but from the image of the object that is in his mind."

### Place in Program and Aim

If hand-work has a legitimate place in the program, there are some further points to settle. Is it necessary or desirable that it be employed with each lesson? Why not? Isn't there a grave danger of becoming prosaically uniform in our programs? Let us always regard each

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lesson as a unit, and study how best to teach that particular lesson. Such work in the upper grades is often done at home. Will this be the case with little children? In your opinion, is there any unfortunate drop in following by hand-work a story that has aroused feeling? Do you see an advantage in using it the following Sunday in connection with the review? Might it form an effective approach to the story by illustrating the truth to be taught, as, for instance, drawing things the children are glad for, preparatory to a thanksgiving story? Supposing the blackboard instead of paper is used, is there any opportunity for group work? State the advantages and disadvantages of the blackboard over individual sheets of paper.

However, the chief point to be remembered, if hand-work is employed, is its aim—to *impress the truth by self-expression*. Our goal is spiritual, and it is the meaning of the story that makes its illustration valuable, the intensified feeling that is the reason for drawing the flower that made us glad, or coloring the apple that is given for food, or trying to show the bird's-nest which a careful Father teaches his birds to make.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. State the aim of hand-work.
2. Discuss some one kind of hand-work, in regard to its effectiveness or ineffectiveness.
3. Report on "Children's Ways," chapter on "First Pencilings," by James Sully.
4. Is story illustration helpful? If so, why?
5. State the points applicable to Beginners' hand-work from "Hand-work in the Sunday school," chapter on "Illustrative Work," by Milton S. Littlefield.
6. Give your ideas as to the method of employing hand-work and its place in the program.

## LESSON XIX

### UTILIZING THE PLAY INSTINCT

*Perhaps play is the best key to the secrets of child nature. It is the spontaneous expression of those very tendencies which education must use.—Murray*

#### What Is Play?

The very phrase "child labor" makes the blood of a lover of children boil, so general is the belief in the right of childhood to play. Yet the very same person may protest against "wasting precious moments in play" in Sunday school. Such an one needs to have a clear perception of what play is. That it is pleasurable is obvious, for no normal child has to be forced to play. That it is instinctive almost goes without saying, for is not the whole life of a young child play? And, happily, in these enlightened days, that anything is delightful as well as natural gives it an educational claim.

Is play, as we are considering it, merely an outlet for surplus activity? Some one has designated this sort of play "fooling." Real play is a very different matter and is to the child a serious though enjoyable thing.

Is play merely an index to new physical powers? That it is this is evident. How a baby delights in creeping and then in walking and by and by in skipping! Often with no end or aim in view he practises his new

## UTILIZING THE PLAY INSTINCT

achievements for pure love of using recently-acquired powers.

Isn't play more than this? Isn't it a preparation for life? Watch a kitten at play. How is its play an apprenticeship for its role of hunter? Watch a little child feeling, smelling, tasting and looking at the objects he plays with. He is learning about them and how he can use them. See how a young child delights in filling the dish on the table with beans and then taking them all out and transferring them to the dish on the desk, and when that is filled, happily trudging back again with them. Isn't this good practise for the drudgery of life's tasks? Observe the little girl's tender care for her doll. Doesn't this bode well for motherhood?

We have spoken of the child's play as serious. It is serious because the child, when he is "making believe" be a horse or a motorman or a shepherd, is not acting a part or showing off to others his dramatic ability—not at all. He is, for the time being, actually the person or animal represented. He is not acting but being. As far as he can understand the feelings and actions of a horse, so far he is a horse. It matters not whether or not he has observers, unless they so call his attention to himself that he forsakes his play. He is wholly engaged in losing his own personality in that of a horse.

There is nothing light or trivial about this matter of becoming another creature. It is a child's first step out of himself. Through his play he is learning to understand and therefore appreciate another's feelings and individuality, even though that other be as simple a form of life as a butterfly. It is good for a boy to stop being a boy awhile and become a butterfly, so that he may begin

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to get out of his egoism by realizing a butterfly's as well as a boy's point of view.

Play is the great instinctive expression of childhood. James Sully says, "Play is the working out in visible shape of an inner fancy." Elsewhere it has been said, "The child's pleasurable response to his environment in his play"—play leading to an understanding of that environment.

### Ideal of Education

Impressed with this idea of play, the modern educator seizes it, as he seizes all vital instincts, as a means to his end—the development of the child. Froebel, more than any educator, realized the value of play, and utilized it in his system of education. His remarkable "Mother Play" analyzes and arranges the mother's natural early plays with a young child as a basis for the kindergarten.

Some one has gone so far as to say, "Education should be play, organized to prepare for complete living." I wonder if you get the full force of such a statement, in the face of the traditional idea that duty is a synonym for joylessness and that education means unpleasant tasks done possibly cheerfully but never by any chance gladly. Isn't the time at hand when the school boy no longer whines, or creeps "like a snail unwillingly to school," when work is play and instincts proper educational material?

But do some of you feel that we are in danger of sending spineless children out into the world? Isn't there something in the old idea of forcing oneself to study a distasteful subject simply to demonstrate one's power of overcoming? Let us think of this for a moment. There must be a certain amount of detail work,



## UTILIZING THE PLAY INSTINCT

so-called drudgery, in order to accomplish any task. To a genius, absorbed as he is in his work and in love with it, even this is done joyously, for the sake of the goal. And without doubt work so done is best done.

Then, too, a boy will perform hardships and monotonous tasks in play with ease and delight, which if demanded of him as work would be grudgingly executed. If by any means the element of joyousness can be infused into that which educates him, think of the gain in the quality of work done! It is still work, there are hard tasks to be performed, but the pleasure in doing them acts as a wonderful incentive. "In planning our school systems we have snubbed nature," says Mr. Johnson, in his "Education by Plays and Games." The tendency now is to take nature into the closest confidence; no, rather, to sit at her feet and learn of her and be, as educators, merely her allies.

### The Play Spirit in Sunday School

And now to return to our original reason for discussing the whole question—is there a place for this instinct in Sunday school, or do the desired atmosphere of reverence and the nature of the subjects of thought make this out of the question? A child may sing and pray and question and talk and even move about freely, we have conceded. May he ever play? Certainly he should not play in the sense of fooling, nor will it be often desirable to introduce movements that have behind them no thought. But, if we banish legitimate play, we run into the greatest danger of opening the door to the play that is mere mischief. And do we not deny the child a very effective means of education by excluding from our

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Sunday-school session the kind of play we have discussed?

We spoke, while studying story-telling, of the interest children take in acting out at home some of the stories they hear, and concluded that "playing" an occasional story which lends itself to this method of reproduction makes it more vivid. Tell me again your feeling about the sort of stories we would choose for this. Do the children ever spontaneously use gesture as they retell the stories?

The play spirit may be utilized more frequently in the little physical exercises that are very necessary in relieving a cramped position and in insuring attention to the story that is to come. When such exercises have a thought behind they are real play and an important part of the hour. These are usually the impersonation of some object of nature, and a child through such simple play gains a vivid impression of many a truth we have tried to teach through story, song and conversation.

He is a garden flower, drooping for lack of rain, and when the refreshing drops come pattering down, he slowly and gladly raises his head and stretches out his leaves. He is the windmill turned by the wind or the tree shaken by it, and so feels its strength and mystery. He is an evergreen tree sheltering winter birds, or a fruit tree whose branches are heavily laden. He becomes one of the drops of water that form the stream, and will tell you what favorite animal or flower or bird he is giving a drink. Here is a brooding mother-bird, with tenderness in every motion. There is a swaying flower, its sweet face upheld to the sun that gives it life. Quite naturally the explanatory Bible verse or song is used in connection with the exercise, and no one who has seen the eager in-

## UTILIZING THE PLAY INSTINCT

terest with which a child enters into this play can question its fitting place in the Sunday school. And in the little child there is a lack of self-consciousness that makes it very real.

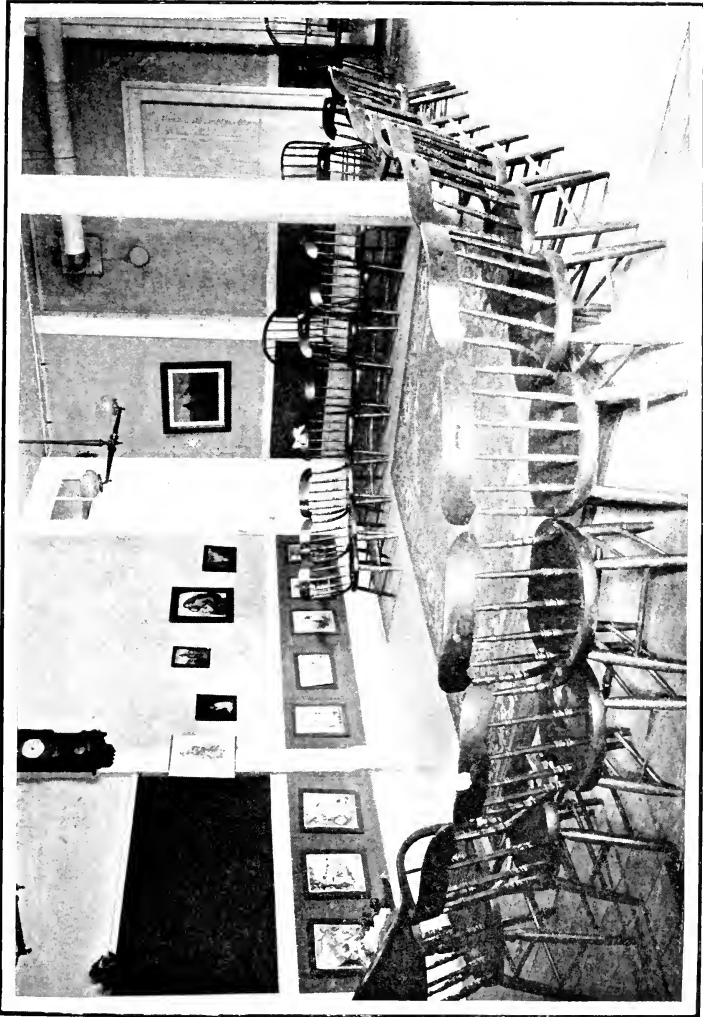
This same play impulse may be seized upon in making the circle talk varied and animated. The children find it wearisome to always tell how they help at home, but delightful to show this in pantomime and have the other children guess what they mean. So often, anyway, things will be shown by children who cannot be induced to talk. This delight in guessing may be still further employed by keeping the drawings the children make a mystery, till guessed by the others, or possibly letting them whisper to you the drawing they wish you to make, the rest guessing what it is. In the case of drawings possibly as much of the imaginary element is necessary as that used in transforming a stick into a doll! The sense of mystery is appealed to also by asking the children to close their eyes and when they open them to see who is standing by a certain picture. Impersonation is used in the motion songs and in finger plays. Indeed, the very choosing of songs, as we have said, need not be mechanical, but can be made interesting through the play spirit.

And let us not be blind to what "make-believe" is in its final development. Ideals are formed by this wonderful power of picturing ourselves other than we are. Sympathy is engendered by impersonating others. Faith—the belief in the unseen—has its root in this serious, educative, alluring instinct of play.

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Give what you consider the best definition of play.
2. Show how play is a serious thing to a child.
3. Compare old and new ideas of the possibility of education being pleasurable.
4. Report on the chapter on "The Moral Value of Playing with Dolls," in "Child Nature and Child Nurture," by Edward P. St. John.
5. Review "Education by Plays and Games," by George Ellsworth Johnson, chapter on "Play in Education."
6. Mention various ways in which the play<sup>3</sup> instinct may be utilized in Sunday school.



A dingy furnace room transformed into a room for the Beginners' department by painting the woodwork white, the floor stone-color, the walls pale blue, hanging permanent pictures low, adding a burlap dado for story pictures, and encasing the furnace pipe in a tin jacket painted white



## LESSON XX

### OUR SURROUNDINGS

*The conception of the universe which we gain in childhood is never wholly changed by later impressions; and he who has early absorbed the idea that the world holds nothing but what is dark and dingy, ugly, ungraceful and sordid, will sink his mental and moral ideals to the same level.—Kate Douglas Wiggin*

#### **Are They Important?**

There was once a private kindergarten whose appointments were almost ideal. A low-studded, homelike room finished in light wood looked out through many windows upon a grove of oaks, where in spring and fall birds sang and in winter squirrels played. A few good pictures hung low on the soft-tinted walls, and sun and air had free access. Yet the children of wealthy families that attended showed little interest or spontaneity. In the heart of the congested section of a near-by city a kindergarten was held in two rooms of a plain tenement. The few windows were high and small. There was no system of ventilation except through raising these windows. The rooms were neat and the most possible had been done to overcome their disadvantages, yet even so the surroundings were anything but ideal. Yet the children of the poor found here delight and freedom for natural development. In spite of environment the better work was done here,

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for the great difference lay not so much in the class of children as in the personalities and ideals of the kindergartners.

Shall we, then, conclude that our surroundings are of little account? Compared to a teacher's personality they certainly are. But consider, if a teacher has such personality and power that she can be inspiring under poor conditions, how much more might she be capable of, if her environment was a help instead of a hindrance.

The influence of surroundings is subtle and often indefinable. Think back to your own childhood and you will feel again the spell of the moods certain places induced in you. Describe to me some such places and the kind of feeling they still arouse in retrospect. Did you ever speak of it in your childhood? Did you then realize that these places were accountable for your feelings, pleasurable or otherwise? The chances are that you unconsciously sought or avoided them, and that it was only later you understood the reason for doing so. Walt Whitman finely expresses this susceptibility to environment:

"There was a child went forth every day,  
And the first object that he looked upon, that object he became,  
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain  
part of the day,  
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.  
The early lilacs became part of this child,  
And grass, and white and red morning glories, and white and  
red clover, and the song of the phœbe bird."

So we need not argue that because children many times appear unobservant of their surroundings or indifferent to them, they are not important. We are seldom aware of the air we breathe, but it permeates our whole nature for good or evil. Perhaps an unconscious absorbing of



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his surroundings is the best description of the child's attitude. Neither, as we said before, can we be greatly influenced by good results under poor conditions. And, anyway, good and bad are comparative terms, and what some might call poor would be to others good surroundings.

### Ideal Environment

A good garden is a place where flowers grow well, and Froebel was certainly inspired when he originated the name "kindergarten." The environment in which children will best develop is clearly the ideal environment. We have come to the conclusion that normal growth necessitates freedom. Where is a little child most free? Of course at home. What, then, will be the test of our ideal environment? Will it not be homelikeness? This may seem to some of us discouraging, for visions arise of church pews fringed with little dangling legs; of high-studded chapels with the light strained and colored by stained glass windows; of damp cellars, where unsightly furnaces glow in winter and where clammy coolness is the summer atmosphere. And yet apparently impossible conditions can be at least alleviated and more often banished than a faint heart dares hope.

Let us first picture the surroundings we would like to have, and then try to solve particular problems. Our ideal room will of course be only for the Beginners, and on the ground floor. We surely will agree that one of the conditions necessary to plant growth is necessary to the well-being and pleasure of children. What is this? If we can get into our Beginners' room sunshine, or at least light and fresh air, we shall have gone a long way to-

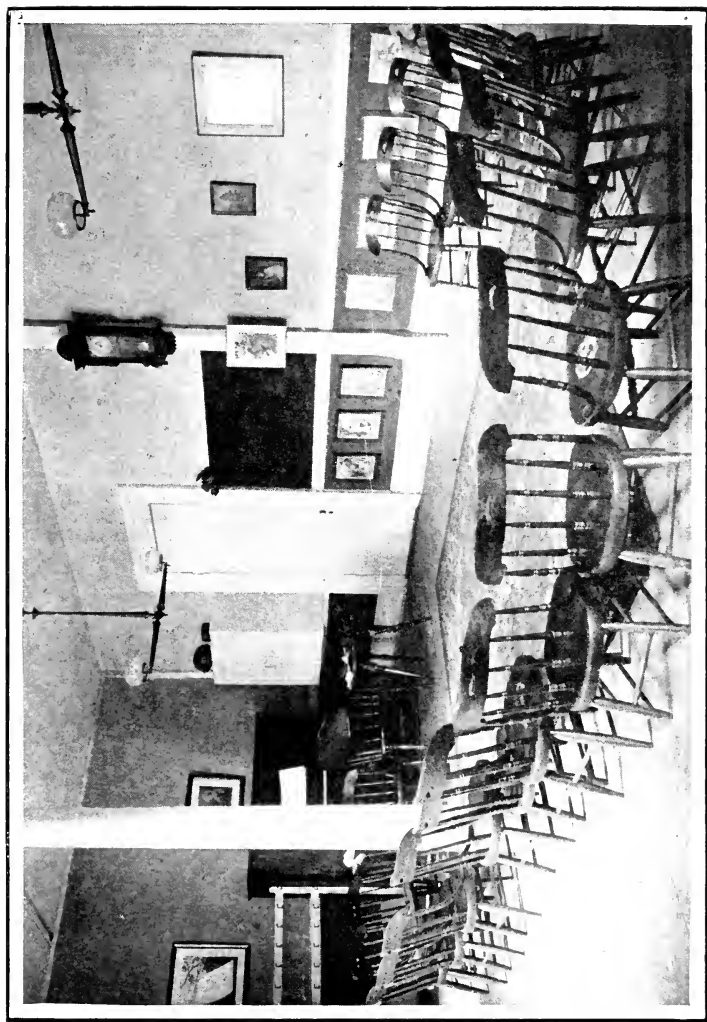
## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

ward producing a homelike feeling. Gloom and darkness tend to make a little child lonely and afraid, and stale air is deadening.

In this ideal room would you have the ceiling far above the heads of the little people, or would you prefer a low-studded room? Which is more homelike? Should the room be much larger than the circle of chairs? What additional space is needed? There must be an inconspicuous place for visitors, but otherwise the walls ought to be as near the children as possible. Far-away walls and pictures never really form a part of the little child's environment, which is composed, like his ideas, of things close at hand.

What should be the general effect of the walls? A good background for pictures is certainly needed, and light woodwork and dainty walls are pleasing to children. A burlap dado is a very convenient place for fastening story pictures which need to be frequently changed, and has the added advantage of bringing them within sight and touch. The whole question of pictures, however, was discussed in a recent lesson. A low blackboard painted upon the wall is not a disfigurement, although a movable blackboard may be preferred. Is a bare floor best? How is a rug a help to order? Will rubber tips on the chairs accomplish the same thing?

Many of us, already established in rooms far from this ideal, may by this time feel discouraged, but we will pass now to the question of furniture, in which there are possibilities for us all. Assuredly the most essential furniture is seats of some sort. What advantages have chairs over settees? Of what height should such chairs be? Is it wise to have some shorter than others? Is a musical



Southwest view, showing arrangement of chairs, with teacher's chair and low table, rug, cabinet for supplies, piano, and blackboard painted on the wall



## OUR SURROUNDINGS

instrument necessary? Do little children sing better with a piano or an organ? State advantages or disadvantages of tables. Even though, for the simple hand-work done in the brief time at your disposal, you prefer that the children shall use the seats of the chairs, doesn't every teacher need a low table, where flowers, objects of nature brought in by the children, the papers for the day and pictures can be placed? A cabinet for supplies is also a great convenience, and if made to order can be of the right size for the pictures, papers, drawing materials, song books, and whatever else may constitute the material. Some place for disposing of the wraps prevents a disorderly appearance of the room. Where a closet is not available, a light rack or hooks on the wall in an inconspicuous place form good substitutes. Possibly the only additional necessity, except seats for the visitors, is a screen, placed before the door, so that late comers may remove their wraps without disturbing the class.

Many modern kindergarten rooms furnish good models for an ideal Beginners' room—light, sunny, homelike and attractive, and any one who is planning a parish house or special Sunday-school building would better examine such rooms.

### Our Problems

For the great majority of us the ideal environment is not immediately possible. Our problem is as near an approach to that ideal as can be managed. So let each of us present her problem and we will help solve one another's.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>While a text-book cannot solve local problems, and while suggestions are expected from the class, a few possible solutions are given.

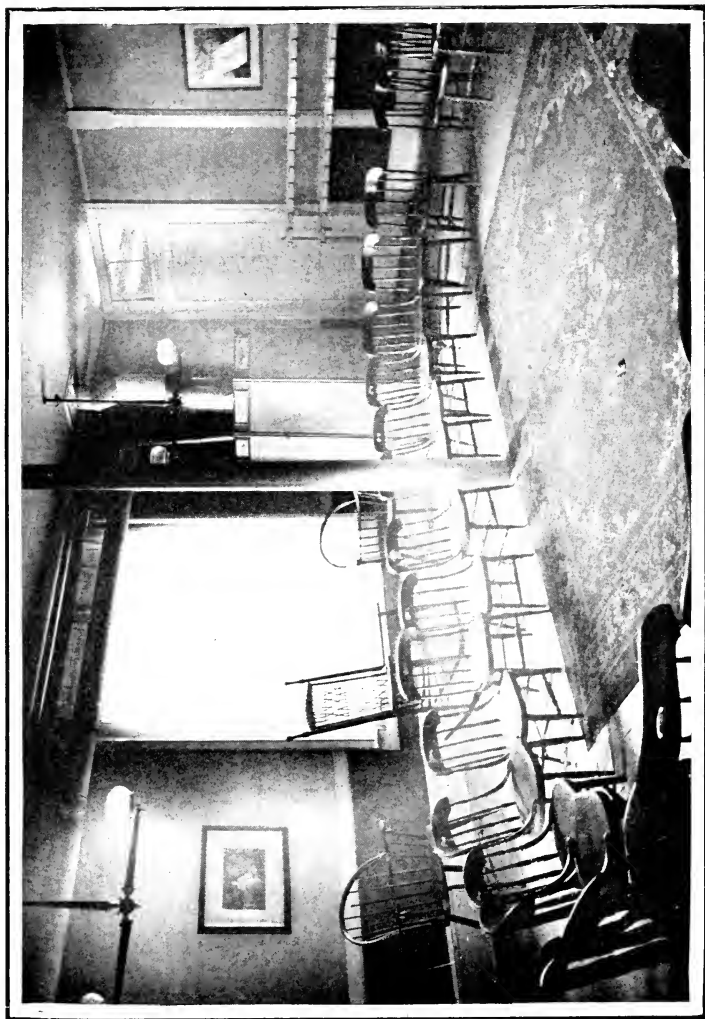
## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

The first requisite of an ideal environment we decided to be a room alone on the ground floor. How many have that? Isn't there some room you can have? Possibly you can make use of a room in a near-by private house. Where the room must be shared with the primary children, curtains or screens may be utilized. These may form temporary walls for hanging pictures. If your place of meeting is the one church room, at least choose a cosy corner, separated by screens, the framework of which may be cheaply made by a local carpenter, and stained and covered by you. Even if church pews must be the seats, there can be footstools to support short legs.

Do any of you fail in having light and fresh air? I know a teacher who had a stained glass window changed for one of plain glass. Occasionally a new window may be cut. Narrow boards under the windows allow fresh air to enter between the sashes, and a room that is well-aired before the session will not become very close during the hour. Often in warm weather the class may meet on the church lawn where there is no lack of light and air.

Is your problem one of the size of the room? A small room cannot be stretched to suit, but it can be emptied of all unessential furniture, and the circle, or, better, the incomplete circle, including a bit of the wall where hang the pictures, can be arranged to make the most of the available space. A large, unhomelike room, on the contrary, can be given a cosy effect by means of screens, shutting off some of the unnecessary space.

There is little excuse for any of us not improving the appearance of the walls. Dingy or dark walls may be tinted, and woodwork painted white at slight expense



Southeast view, showing furnace hidden by a screen, visitors' chairs, window with curtain, rack for wraps and cradle roll





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and surely not to the detriment of the room for other uses. A burlap dado may often be added. An ordinary bare floor may be painted some shade harmonizing with the wall coloring, and an ugly carpet covered with a rug.

As to the furniture, it is possible to cut off the legs of high chairs, if low ones cannot be procured, and hooks for wraps and shelves painted white for supplies cost little. A musical instrument is the greatest expense, and if a good one cannot be obtained, it is better to sing without, if you or an assistant can carry the tune.

### How to Get Ideal Surroundings

We Sunday-school teachers often say, with a virtuous air, "We must be patient with our surroundings." But, after all, isn't patience sometimes the excuse of an indolent nature? It is the dissatisfied teacher who insists on better conditions—and gets them. "Where there's a will there's a way" is a pretty good working motto.

The first step is to awaken the interest of the church people. Invite the prudential committee to visit the department and while they are fascinated with the children, point out the defects in your room. Most prudential committees are not as unapproachable as one imagines, and the appeal of an enthusiastic teacher is gladly met.

However, the people most interested should be the parents of the children, and they will be if they realize the importance of the work that is being done. Parents who visit the class Sunday after Sunday will be as eager as the teacher to enhance the beauty of the room, and will usually be ready to contribute money or get up entertainments or solicit among friends for this cause. The parents of a certain Sunday school raised money in this way

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for a piano, at Christmas the mothers gave a curtain for the window, a father had a rack made for wraps, and some permanent pictures were given by parents whose children belonged to the department or in memory of those who had died. Still another way of getting funds is through a double offering, any additional money brought by the children being used "to make our room beautiful."

At any rate remember this—a good environment means that we as teachers have the right ideal and the enthusiasm that is better than patience, because we are willing to work and to inspire others to work for the good of the children.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. State your idea of the importance of a child's environment.
2. What are the general characteristics of ideal Sunday-school surroundings for little children?
3. Do you find any suggestions in "Kindergarten Principles and Practise," by Wiggin and Smith, chapter on "The School of Speusippus"?
4. Describe an ideal Beginners' room, when one can plan the building and buy the furnishings.
5. Describe your own surroundings and suggest how they might be improved.
6. Give some practical methods of making possible good surroundings.

## LESSON XXI

### MAKING THE MACHINERY RUN SMOOTHLY

*Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well.—  
Earl of Chesterfield*

#### Importance of Organization

In our course of lessons we have proceeded quite oppositely to many people's idea of proper progression. We began by studying the child, then endeavored to find out the kind of religion that would fit his needs, criticised existing curricula, discussed at length the various teaching methods which would be most effective, and have only toward the end come to the subjects of equipment and organization which are commonly considered first. For are not organization and equipment merely means to an end? And if the importance of that end be not thoroughly appreciated, of what possible use are the very finest surroundings and provisions? To actually do something with little organization and under poor conditions is far better than to organize amid ideal surroundings with no conception of the reason for so doing.

In our last lesson we contrasted two kindergartens, to the disparagement of that having the more ideal environment. I have seen Beginners' departments, in which every detail was carefully arranged, and yet where the atmosphere was so lacking in spirituality and the teach-

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ing in force that I could not help querying, "Was it all worth such perfect machinery?" I have, on the other hand, seen really inspired teaching done in departments where there were unnecessary interruptions, a lack of records, and general hit-or-miss management, and I have wondered, "Wasn't it worth better machinery?"

### The Teaching Force

We do need some machinery, in order to do the most effective work, and yet we want this machinery to run very, very smoothly, or otherwise we shall destroy the homelike atmosphere so essential to the Beginners' department. For after all it is just a company of tiny children we have gotten together for story-telling and to sing and talk, and it would be absurd to build up about such a group an elaborate and formal organization. The machinery that must run smoothly should also be invisible. In other words, let us minimize red tape.

Suppose we at first decide what adults are needed in this department. Will this depend something upon its size? Do you consider one teacher sufficient for a small class of ten or twelve children? What reason would there be for an assistant? No matter how small the class there will be some interruptions from late comers and the secretary's or treasurer's visit, and it is difficult to lead in singing when one plays as well. However, some arrangement should be made whereby the collection and record of attendance can be taken without any interruption, a tactful teacher can remove wraps while continuing the session, and a small group can gather about the piano to sing. So it is possible for one teacher to fill

## MAKING THE MACHINERY RUN

the office of superintendent, pianist, secretary and assistant.

In a large school there should be at least one assistant, who will fulfil all the duties apart from the actual teaching. Her chief qualification, in addition to love of children, should be musical ability. The rest of her work should be done unostentatiously, with the thought always foremost of protecting the class from interruptions.

Do you think that a department of fifty or over needs more assistants? Is a secretary essential? If so, what should be her duties? Certainly there should be some records kept, such as the name of each child, his birthday, the date of his entering the department and his parents' address. The attendance needs also to be recorded in some simple, accurate way. What system have you found best? Would you take the time for a roll-call every Sunday? Isn't it natural to occasionally speak of absent children? Doesn't it increase the feeling that the class is a big family, any member of which is missed when away? Shouldn't the record of absentees accomplish more than this? Mailing the child's folder to him gives him not alone a delightful feeling of being looked after, but makes it possible for him to hear the story he has missed. Much better is the paper delivered by a teacher. Some large departments divide the children among a number of assistants, who call upon those absent from their group, or find out in some way the reason for non-attendance.

In a very large school a number of assistants can be used in this way, to aid in taking off and putting on wraps, and to sit in the circle with the children, helping in the singing, in extricating pennies from minute purses

## LESSONS FOR TEACHERS OF BEGINNERS

or hard knots in handkerchiefs, and perhaps holding a young child during the story period. Such assistants, however, need to be unobtrusive, lest they hinder more than help. A teacher does not wish whispered colloquies between her assistants and children, nor should adult voices predominate in the singing.

Another important duty for somebody is to have charge of the supplies, seeing that they are in order and that everything needed in the way of folders, story papers, pictures, crayons and drawing paper is at hand. This usually means that the room should be visited sometime before the session. Where the class is held in the morning or afternoon, at least one teacher should be there soon enough to greet early-comers and provide something for them to do, either in getting the room ready or examining pictures or possibly engaging in some preparatory hand-work.

### Other Arrangements

The foregoing plans are made for a department meeting in a room alone and taught as a single circle. What officers may be eliminated when it seems necessary for the Beginners' and Primary departments to meet together? Is this an ideal arrangement? What are the arguments for and against dividing into two or more circles? What further requisites will it make essential in the assistants? Certainly the same story will be told to all, even though by different teachers, or the circle talk is an impossibility. Is there usually one person, even when a number form the teaching corps, who tells stories particularly well? It seems to me a pity for any one of the children to miss the inspiration of a finely-told story.

## MAKING THE MACHINERY RUN

Do you find there is a certain enthusiasm that comes from numbers, and that one child's expression of thought in the circle talk stimulates another? Or do you feel that the shy children will only express themselves in a small group? These questions must decide for each of those who have large departments which is the better method. The argument that if the teaching is done by one person the assistants have nothing to do is absurd, for besides the duties that have been outlined, there are the visitors to be welcomed and quietly seated, the ventilation to be attended to, and various other helpful things apparent to one tactful and observant. Then, too, a teacher will sometimes let an assistant take charge of the circle talk or tell the story in her place. Young assistants will find this very valuable practise, if the teacher will criticize them afterwards.

### The Cradle Roll and School Finances

But of whom are our Beginners' departments formed? In a well-organized Sunday school there is a record kept of the babies who will come to Sunday school when old enough—a kind of waiting-list, called the Cradle Roll. The superintendent of the Cradle Roll may be the one teacher of the Beginners' department, an assistant, or a mother of one of the children. Her duties are to add new babies to the list and notify the parents when their children have reached the proper age to be enrolled in the Beginners' department—usually at four years, sometimes a trifle younger. What other duties will such a superintendent have in connection with the babies' birthdays? Christmas? Is a Cradle Roll party ever advisable?

Another question is that of finance. It costs something

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for the regular supplies of the Beginners' department as well as for the room furnishings we have discussed. How are these expenses met in your school? Is there a special apportionment for the Beginners' department, or are the school finances managed as a whole? State the advantages in your mind of having the Sunday school supported by the church.

### Teacher Training

One other phase of organization needs to be spoken of, and that is teacher training. There should be some plan for keeping present teachers up to their best and for training future teachers. Have you any such provision?

The teachers may belong to a city union, and gain help from Beginners' teachers of other Sunday schools, taking up some such course as this, especially adapted to teachers of little children. Such is the most ideal kind of organization, as numbers usually stimulate thought and many viewpoints broaden the outlook. Next best is a teacher-training class composed of the teachers of one Sunday school, taking up a more comprehensive course, such as child study extending over more years or Bible study. There can, again, be teachers' meetings, where the teachers talk over general matters and particular children. However, such meetings can usually include a little definite study, and are certainly vastly more helpful if they do so.

As to future teachers, they may be members of a preparatory training class, and observe and at the same time assist in the Beginners' department, or, if there is no such class, they may meet with the teachers already teaching. Such future teachers may, as they advance in their course,



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occasionally tell the story or conduct the circle talk, always under supervision and with criticism afterwards. Visiting other Beginners' departments and day kindergartens, attending summer schools, institutes and conventions are all helpful.

Perhaps some of you may think that an entire lesson on organization hardly tallies with the opening remarks in regard to doing away with red tape. But the suggestions that have been made, if carried out, will not detract at all from the freedom or homelikeness of the department, but make it possible to keep track of the family of children whom we see only once a week, and accomplish the most possible in the short hour that is ours together.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. How important do you consider the organization of a Beginners' department?
2. Give your idea of the number of teachers necessary in large and small departments and their duties.
3. Do you think the best arrangement for teaching a Beginners' department a circle or several small groups?
4. Explain the function of the Cradle Roll.
5. Give your ideas as to the best method of financing the Beginners' department.
6. What further teacher training do you feel necessary and possible for yourself?

## LESSON XXII

### HOME COOPERATION

*To and fro, between home and school, the children go, blessed little messengers of good will; and when the kindergartner comes to see the mother, or the mother to advise with the kindergartner, they are not strangers, though they may never have met before.—Nora Archibald Smith*

#### **Relation of Home and Sunday School**

It is a far cry back to the old days when the home was the center of the child's education. We have not reached the Spartan ideal of giving over our children entirely to the state, but we are approaching it, as regards education, not only secular but religious. The ordinary mother feels incompetent to teach her children according to modern methods, and puts them in charge of trained teachers. So, too, many mothers trust their children's religious nurture to the Sunday school.

Isn't it your experience that mothers read the Bible to their children or tell Bible stories less commonly than once? How many parents do you know who have a well-thought-out scheme of religious education for their children, which they attempt to promulgate? Do most of the parents of your children know just what religious teaching they are getting in Sunday school? Did you

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ever hear of parents who refused to send their children to a Sunday school because the teaching did not coincide with their views, preferring to teach them at home? How do such parents compare in your estimation with those who neither know nor care what their children are taught?

Much as we may regret any lapse in home religious teaching, we can see the advantage of children meeting together in Sunday school and receiving instruction according to approved methods. And this need not in the least detract from the importance of the home teaching. Is there anything we, as teachers, long for more than home cooperation? Is there any greater help we can have than parents pledged to carry on the same teaching that we give in the Sunday school? The home and the Sunday school supplementing each other, working together, as neither institution can work alone, the Sunday school giving the children the impetus and inspiration that an outside influence does give, combined with the incomparable nurture and encouragement of the home—this is our ideal.

### **Ideal Home Help**

An institute speaker once concluded an ardent plea for home cooperation, when the pastor of the church asked, in a convinced but puzzled voice, "Exactly what do Sunday-school teachers wish the mothers to do?" So let us be practical and instead of prating generalities mention specific ways in which home help may be given.

The prevailing idea, with both parents and teachers, is that home cooperation means assisting or compelling the children to learn their lessons. The pupil who

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comes to Sunday school able to recite perfectly the memory verse and to tell every detail of the story is commonly considered to have had the best of home help. In the upper grades, too, those pupils who do well the so-called "home work" of writing in note-books, pasting pictures, looking up facts, and the like, are regarded as being carefully kept to their duties by their parents. Is this the sort of help we desire from the mothers of our little children? Shall we expect any of this type of home work from them?

Surely any hand-work will be done during the class session. Such simple home work as looking up pictures of flowers, birds, Christmas or Thanksgiving pictures is liable to be forgotten by our children, unless special word is sent to their mothers in regard to it. It is more natural for a child to bring in flowers or leaves or shells or pine-cones as gifts for his teacher without being asked, and such objects of nature can be made a very real part of the lesson, by being traced to the Creator of all beauty.

We, of course, do want the stories reread or retold. Telling the Bible story with other favorites at the bedtime story hour helps the children to regard it as something quite different from a lesson to be learned. We also want the Bible verses used at home. The word "used" is employed advisedly. This is not the age for strict memory work, and the sympathetic repetition of the Bible verse, after the story is told, or as a comment on the story picture, and also in connection with any object or event of every day, is a kind of home help that infuses life into it.

It is this connection of our Sunday-school teaching

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with the children's home life that is the real cooperation we want. We simply try to interpret the life the child actually lives, and if at home the teaching is carried on and illustrated by the home experiences, then, indeed, we may hope to accomplish great things. The folders of the International Graded Beginners' Course, issued by a syndicate, contain suggestions for such specific help in the home, called "The Mother's Part."

### Specific Suggestions

As is often said, we learn only through experience, and education is merely arranging a set of experiences for children, which will expedite the acquiring of knowledge. Our Sunday-school teaching must be largely theoretical, and it certainly needs the practical home occurrences in order to be really effective.

Suppose, for instance, the story is about David and his sheep, told to bring out the lesson of tender care for God's creatures. The mother's part, in this case, is not so much to see that the child knows every detail of the story as to encourage him to carry out its teaching—to hold him responsible for feeding the cat or dog, to suggest saving crumbs from his meals for the birds, to avoid killing or injuring harmless insects. When there is a series of stories on obedience, there is a chance to create many opportunities for its exercise at home. When there is one on helpfulness, the mother who knows this sees that there are plenty of chances to help at home, and takes special pains to appreciate any voluntary offer of assistance.

The heavenly Father's care is recognized in common comforts, which are made a subject of the evening prayer.

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Indeed, this petition often is influenced by the nature of the Sunday-school lessons. Sunday-school songs are sung at home, not merely to be learned, but for the love of singing and for the connection they have with home life. Thus, as children of this age have so few interests, if home and Sunday school consider the same subjects, think of the impression made!

### **How to Accomplish This**

Who is to blame for a lack of this ideal cooperation? We teachers are apt to say the parents. Is it not largely, however, our own fault? How many of you call at the homes of the children? ask the mothers to visit the class? give any parties or gatherings to which the mothers are invited? hold mothers' meetings or form mothers' clubs? take any pains to interest the parents in the lessons? ask their advice in regard to Sunday-school matters? solicit their aid in getting up programs for special days or in making the room more attractive? In most cases the lack of cooperation is simply a failure to get together, for where this is accomplished it is easy to work for a common end.

We teachers need to know the mothers so as to know our children. They can help us inestimably in explaining one child's shyness, or another's apparent obstinacy, or the failure of a third to comprehend. They need to visit our classes occasionally, to understand what we are trying to do. Is there any objection in your mind to this? Surely mothers are a help when they are in sympathy with us, and are willing to leave the management of the children entirely in our hands, and listen to their quaint remarks without comment.

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No teacher need feel too young or inexperienced to organize a mothers' club or to hold mothers' meetings. The mothers will understand that she is simply the leader of the meeting, and not in any sense a lecturer on the way they should bring up their children! How have you found such a club most helpful? An excellent beginning is to make a study of the course of lessons you are teaching and get the mothers to tell what response the children make at home. A book on child study may be taken up and studied together. Perhaps as good a book as there is for this purpose is "Child Nature and Child Nurture," by Edward Porter St. John, in which subjects like "The Meaning of the Child's Fears" and "Training the Child to Love" are discussed. In discussions of such vital topics much help is gained by all.

Whatever means are used, we teachers must in some way get into contact with the mothers of our children, that their religious education may not be incomplete, but that it may enter into every event, every relationship and every circumstance that touches them.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. Compare the place of the home in old and in modern educational schemes.
2. What home work, if any, is possible for little children?
3. What different ideal for home work have you than the mere learning of a lesson and of Scripture?
4. Mention some special Bible story, tell why it is told, and what can be done at home to make it more effective.
5. What means do you regard as most effective in leading to home cooperation?
6. Make out a program for an ideal mothers' meeting.

## LESSON XXIII

### FESTIVAL DAYS

*In the nature of things there must be holidays. How poverty-stricken is that soul which does not recognize this tendency and throw itself heartily into the work of helping forward the good time youth and unspoiled minds accept with gratitude!—Florence Hull Winterburn*

#### Are Festivals Important?

Festival days are the delight of many teachers and the bugbear of others. There are teachers who seem to regard the Sunday-school curriculum as a series of "concerts," connected by drills and rehearsals, and consider a good year's work accomplished if their children appear well at these public performances. No sooner is Rally Day over than plans are laid and songs rehearsed for Christmas; the Christmas tree is scarcely turned brown when Easter recitations are given out; nor are Easter lilies faded before Children's Day drill has commenced. On the other hand, those teachers who consider public appearances a positive harm to little children and drill in songs and recitations in no sense a part of their religious education, dread instead of anticipate festival days, or refuse to allow their children to appear publicly then. These are the two extremes. Is there any inter-



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mediate position, or must we all take sides for or against the observance of special days? Discuss frankly your own feeling.

We should first consider the importance of festival days in little children's lives. What day of all the year should you say is dearest to them? Next to Christmas doesn't Thanksgiving hold the most important place? Is Easter a little child's festival? Children's Day was inaugurated for little as well as older children, and Rally Day usually means at the present time Promotion Day, in which even the Beginners' grade has a part. The courses of study for little children take into consideration the importance of special days in their lives; indeed, they are largely based upon special days and seasons, preceding Thanksgiving with lessons on God's care, thus leading up to a spirit of thankfulness; explaining Christmas by stories of the Child Jesus; and letting Easter teach its lesson of continuous life. Do you consider this sufficient observance of these days, or do you wish some more public recognition?

Those who argue on the side of public observance claim that the children's interest is retained by this means, that the Sunday school is brought to people's attention, and that parents are pleased by their children's performances. The importance of the interest and cooperation of parents was considered in the last lesson. How many of you think that public performances are essential to this interest? May they arouse enthusiasm in some parents who would otherwise be indifferent? Might parents be enthusiastic over their children's public appearance who have no conception of the importance of their religious education? Is there something in the argument

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that the Sunday school needs attention called to it? Do you consider it legitimate to advertise such an institution? Isn't there a certain value in making people realize that the Sunday school is accomplishing something?

The first consideration must always be the effect upon the children. Have you seen any disastrous effects from public celebration of special days upon shy children? forward children? Would you, therefore, banish everything of the sort and confine the festival observances to the children's own lesson in their own room? Would you under any circumstances advise substituting such exercises for the regular lesson?

If these festivals are valuable for little children, anything that helps them to feel the spirit of the day is important. Is this done more surely through the regular lessons or through general exercises? If a public celebration ever occurs, would you, then, insist upon its being at a different hour from the Sunday-school session? May it be true that the character and manner of preparing for and conducting such celebrations determine their benefit or harm?

### **Different Types of Services**

Suppose we talk about different types of services for special days. And right here it may be said that there is a distinction in the very titles, exercise and service. There is the exercise whose purpose is to exhibit the children. It is most truly an "exercise," for it taxes them to their utmost ability and requires much rehearsal and drill. The aim of those who "get up" such an exercise, and it is quite frankly and laboriously planned for and worked over, is to make a good impression upon the

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audience. The reward they covet is the comment, "How well the children did! You are to be congratulated that you have drilled them so patiently." Fond parents hear with delight encomiums upon their children's powers, or, if they have failed to achieve anything noteworthy in recitation or song, upon their general attractiveness, their good looks or their clothes. The material used for this type of exercise is commonly of ephemeral value. The emphasis is laid upon the perfect rendering of the songs and poems rather than the thought in them. Children so drilled recite their "pieces" at home or sing the songs for the edification of visitors. Is the effect upon the children educational? helpful in inspiring the spirit of the season? Doesn't it create a desire to show off?

There is another type of service which is a sort of review of the work done in Sunday school. The children recite the Bible verses they have learned and the songs they know, and perhaps even retell some of the stories, with the teacher's assistance. It can be made a mere exercise, in which the children show what they know, or it may be a real service of song and verse. This depends almost entirely upon the teacher's attitude and her manner of conducting the rehearsals. Each rehearsal should partake more of the nature of a service than a drill, and more said about the words spoken or sung than the way in which they are given.

On Children's Day and Rally or Promotion Day the little children's part should always be something they are familiar with, in order to be a real service. A combination of song and Bible verse similar to what they are accustomed to in the circle talk will make the public performance seem like Sunday school, and the children will

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appear natural and not be self-conscious. If the Children's Day service comes in the morning, they can be told that instead of the minister reading from the Bible, they are to repeat the Bible verses they know about the heavenly Father, Jesus, the children's Friend, etc., and that they are to sing some of their songs to God, just as the choir usually sings. The calling of each child's name by the teacher, as it is time for his verse, brings about a homelike feeling. But what of the child who makes an amusing mistake, or refuses to take his part? We know only too well the ripple of laughter which passes over an audience at such an occurrence, the flushed face or tears of the shy child, and the proud smile of the child who likes to attract attention. Can an audience be made to realize the importance of their reception of the children's part in the service? On certain Children's Day programs was printed the following note:

"The children consider this a service and not a performance, and the congregation is requested to help them in this worshipful attitude."

Have you any better plan for making the older people understand the need of care on their part?

### **Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas**

As for Easter, this hardly seems a festival in which little children should take a public part, as they cannot in the least comprehend the teaching of that day for older ones. Is this your view?

Happily, few of us have acquired the habit of a Thanksgiving concert, as this festival comes too near Christmas to make it either necessary or practical in the eyes of those bent upon advertising the Sunday school

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and affording the children a chance to make themselves prominent.

As to Christmas, what is the great peril for our children at this season? Is it not over-excitement? And shall we increase that tendency by public performances, where there are "pieces" to be remembered and much practising to be done? Shall we not rather keep the celebration very simple, insist upon a Christmas lesson in their own room, to which parents may be invited, and where there may be special decorations and the right Christmas spirit? Don't you think this the best Christmas Sunday observance for our children? How many of your Sunday schools have also a Christmas tree or a Christmas party? Do you have the little ones by themselves, or do all meet together? If you meet alone, need there be anything but the tree, with perhaps some old songs and a story? If the Sunday school is so small that it seems wise for all to meet together, and the little children are expected to take a part in the entertainment preceding the distribution of gifts, can't they do something simple, requiring little if any practise? They may assist in telling a story, by taking the part of the toys or animals that figure in it, or they may act out a song in pantomime. Whatever they do should be of such a nature that it is pleasurable and not an exertion.

For, as we said long ago, it is the spirit of these festivals that we wish to foster, if they are to leave any impression on the children, and it is the children's good which must be our first consideration in planning for these special days.

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### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. State your opinion of the importance for little children of observing festival days.
2. Should the effect of their observance upon parents or the Sunday school be at all considered?
3. Describe the type of service you think worth while.
4. Tell how a teacher may keep her children natural in such an exercise.
5. Make out an appropriate service for the Beginners' department on Promotion Day.
6. Give your ideas for the Beginners at the Christmas tree entertainment.

## LESSON XXIV

### THE CHILDREN'S RESPONSE

*And these are they that were sown upon the good ground; such as hear the word, and accept it, and bear fruit.—The Words of Jesus.*

#### Our Aim

We have had so many consecutive lessons on method and management that it seems wise, lest we become over-absorbed in detail, to consider again the reason for our teaching and the measure of our success. "We teach and teach until, like droning pedagogues, we lose the sense that what we teach and learn hath other use than being taught and learned."

We must hark back to the very beginning of our course of lessons to discover this reason in the child himself and his instinctive demand for religion. And what is our measure of success? Not the perfection of our equipment and organization, not the adequacy of our curriculum, not the logical sequence of our program, not the efficiency of our methods—not any or all of these things, but rather the response of the children.

Does this mean that we must turn out model children or consider ourselves as having failed in our task? Whenever we teachers find ourselves model, we may expect our children to be. Does this mean that, at the end

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of our course, we shall produce a graduating class that can recite perfectly a certain amount of Scripture? Possibly, but the response we want is one of feeling rather than knowledge.

When we speak of coveting the child's response, we mean the response of his spiritual rather than intellectual nature, which will show itself both in feeling and conduct. This does not underestimate in the least the importance of the response of the intellect or the vital part played in education by interest. It simply rates these things as means to an end—that end the realization of God, for which we have before used Mrs. Houghton's felicitous phrase, "God-consciousness"; and the desire to be God-like or the love of goodness. These two things are elemental and profoundly religious, for they spell spirituality and the basis of Christian character.

### A Child's Feeling toward God

To regard God as the most important factor of everyday life spiritualizes each circumstance and condition. This was the attitude of the Hebrews toward life, and, though it did not make them perfect human beings, it gave them such a deep spirituality that we owe to them the great revelation of God found in the Bible. Mention men who have possessed in a marked degree this quality—if quality it may be called—of God-consciousness, as Phillips Brooks, whose response to this was a wonderful spirit which blossomed in helpful Christian deeds of a rare order.

In an early lesson we argued that children are instinctively reaching out after God by their wondering questions concerning the cause and origin of things. If we



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have satisfied them by naming the God they seek, and through story, song, Bible verse, conversation and prayer making him real, their response will be very natural. Father and mother, sister and brother will hold scarcely a more important place in their lives than does the heavenly Father. That he is invisible makes him no less real to them, for they live in a world of invisibility, of animism. To them stars feel, stones think, flowers love, behind everything is a thought, in all is feeling. What could be more natural than a loving, invisible Father, caring for his children? And here all about is his handiwork—flowers arising from apparently lifeless seeds; a carpet of green grass and a shade of green foliage; rain, snow, wind and cloud with all their mystery of source; bird and beast and insect equipped with every means of existence and the instinct for preserving it; stars twinkling in immeasurable space.

What has been your children's response to this conception of the universe? This response cannot always be discovered by the children's remarks, as their deepest feelings are usually inarticulate. A chance question or comment will often betray their state of mind. A certain look in the wondering eyes or the way the word God is spoken—not in awed accents, but in a friendly and loving fashion—shows the place he holds in a child's heart. I have known people to speak and write slightly of a child's conception of God and question the possibility of his thoughts being occupied with anything but material surroundings and interests. From such a person a child instinctively hides these thoughts, for as susceptible to ridicule or misunderstanding as the sensitive plant is to rough handling is the confidence of a little child. One

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who has retained this confidence through sympathy will be anything but skeptical in regard to the reality of a child's religious feeling.

"I have brought you some of God's leaves," said a small boy to his teacher.

We were picking strawberries on the hill—wild strawberries, like drops of honey. "Doesn't heavenly Father make these strawberries nice!" commented Charlotte.

We were looking at the sunflowers, and I spoke of how they sowed themselves and grew and blossomed year after year, with no care. "But the heavenly Father is working pretty hard all the time," said Barbara.

I was playfully chiding a little friend for forgetting something we had seen together, when, to my surprise, her eyes suddenly grew serious as she said, "I don't forget the heavenly Father."

In children's prayers we see their confidence in God's power to banish sickness, to afford protection, to temper the beam of the sun and to stop the blowing of the wind. Thanksgiving is referred to as "Heavenly Father's Day," fear allayed by the consciousness of God's watchful care, and every blessing traced with trustful certainty to the Giver of all good.

### The Response of Conduct

And yet the consciousness of God's presence and love for him is not the whole of a child's religion. We want the response of action. Our teaching is far too apt to be academic only. "They know the stories and can recite the Bible verses and sing well," we say with proud satisfaction, when what is the aim of it all? Isn't it

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growth in character? What great gain will there be if we simply arouse feeling? We do not desire children that have merely knowledge; neither do we wish a set of emotional children; we prefer children that act.

Do we then expect an immediate and continuous response in conduct? Do you find your children a little more helpful after each of a group of stories on helpfulness? Shall we see an instantaneous unselfish act follow our lesson on that subject, and prompt obedience the result of a story illustrating that virtue? How is it with ourselves? Do we respond immediately to the fine sermon or touching song or inspiring book? Isn't our next act often a petty one? Has the inspiration, then, gone for nothing? Not at all. The great difference is that we feel our pettiness as never before. The result of having our ideal raised is discontent and contrition at not reaching that ideal, which leads eventually to greater effort and hence greater success. We certainly cannot expect more of our children than of ourselves. To help them distinguish between right and wrong; to make right attractive and desirable and wrong unalluring and detestable; to arouse sorrow and dissatisfaction in wrongdoing and content in approaching the right—that is our aim, and all the response we can expect.

After all, don't you find in yourself that the only effective incentive to goodness is love of goodness? If we have awakened the response of love of right in our children, we may well feel satisfied, even if their acts do not always bear this out. Their ideas in regard to unselfishness and kindness, obedience and helpfulness will often be quaintly expressed.

Mayette's older sister once said her Bible verse in this

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way—"Be ye kind one to another, and another means Mayette."

"I'd hit any dog that tried to hurt my cat," said a sturdy little protector.

"I feed the birds every day," said a small boy; "not the pigeons, those are father's, but the wild birds; they are God's birds and mine."

### Social Service

In Sunday school itself the actual working out of the virtues inculcated is possible. Obedience to the teacher, while made delightful, is obligatory, for freedom does not banish discipline, but rather necessitates it. Giving up one's own desires for the social good is actually practised in Sunday school by joining in the song that isn't one's favorite because another child chooses it; by waiting patiently with the incident of home life one is so eager to relate till another child has an opportunity to tell his tale; by using the self-control necessary to attend quietly to the story; by telling some of it even when one is shy. We teachers, too, are exemplifying good or bad traits all the while. Are we always patient? just? considerate? sympathetic? encouraging? firm? tactful?

Perhaps where we all fail is in making the most of opportunities for this social service—for it seems to me the little child's ideal relationship with others in Sunday school constitutes this. His social service will also include deeds of happy helpfulness to the family circle, caring for pets, the making of gifts to friends. This may be extended somewhat to gifts or kind deeds to other children. Which is preferable at this age—gifts to foreign children, necessitating some account of their customs and



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manners or help for children near by, like the children themselves, only afflicted in some way—poor, sick or without parents? Which will naturally awaken more interest? Isn't the logical sequence interest widening from those near at hand to those farther away? A child's courtesy to the postman, the grocer's boy, the clerks, of whom he makes small purchases, is a part of his social service. His gifts of a chubby handful of flowers or some handiwork painstakingly fashioned, his feeding the winter birds, his picking up his own toys, his careful nurture of garden plants, all these are distinctly the social service of a little child, the first step toward the more extended service of future years.

What can the Beginners' department do besides inspiring through stories and conversation to such acts? Can it undertake any special gift-making at Christmas? Thanksgiving? Easter? Let us remember that money given by the parents is not as much the child's gift as the flower he has picked for the hospital, the scrap-book he has helped make for the sick friend, the toys he has played with and enjoyed and passes on to another child.

To recapitulate, we only approach successful teachers as we see in our children the response of a consciousness of God in the world and in their lives, the love of goodness and a delight in activities that tend toward the well-being and happiness of others.

Co-workers we are with Him! Were he to ask,  
"Come, star with me the spaces of my night,  
Or light with me tomorrow's sunset glow,  
Or fashion forth the crystals of my snow,  
Or teach my sweet June-roses next to blow,"—  
Oh, rare beatitude! But holier task,  
Of all his works of beauty fairest—high,

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Is that he keeps for hands like ours to ply!  
When he upgathers all his elements,  
His days, his nights, whole eons of his June,  
The Mighty Gardener of the earth and sky,  
That to achieve toward which the ages roll,  
We hear thy voice that sets the spheres a-tune,—  
"Help me, my comrades, flower this little Soul!"

—*W. C. Gannett.*

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, REPORTS OR PAPERS

1. What kind of response on the children's part determines our success as teachers?
2. Give some evidences you have witnessed of a child's feeling toward God.
3. What effect will a consciousness of God have upon a little child?
4. In what degree can we expect a response to our teaching in conduct?
5. What in your opinion constitutes the social service of a little child?
6. In such social service how much of the element of self-sacrifice can we expect?













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